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THE SPIRIT

OF

Blessed

ALPHONSUS DE LIGUORI;

A SELECTION FROM HIS SHORTER

SPIRITUAL TREATISES,

Translated from the Italian

BY

THE REV. JAMES JONES.

PRECEDED BY

A Memoir of the Holy Author.



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PREFACE.

The pious avidity with which preceding translations of several of Blessed Liguori's spiritual treatises have been received, and the fervent hope of still further promoting the sacred cause which they have already so powerfully advocated and advanced, induce the translator to publish the following selection. It is entiiled "The Spirit of Blessed Liguori;" as imbodying, in abridgments by himself, the substance of the treatises already translated, and also the greater part of those which have not hitherto appeared in English.

Reader, I seek only your spiritual progress; pray for the translator.

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A Sketch

OF THE

LIFE OF ST. ALPHONSUS LIGUORI.

ALPHONSUS MARIE DE LIGUORI was born of a distinguished family at Marinella, near the city of Naples, on the 27th September, 1696. His father and mother were both of noble extraction: and his paternal uncle, Joseph Cavalieri, was Bishop of Troja, and had great reputation for piety. He received an excellent education, which was superintended during his childhood by his virtuous mother. She was most careful to instil maxims of piety into his tender mind, and to give him a love for regularity and truth in all his actions. She particularly taught him to entertain a great devotion to the Blessed Virgin, and a great zeal for the glory of God. His after life fully proved the value of these lessons, and shewed what deep root they had taken in his infant mind. He was yet very young when the blessed Francis Jeronimo foretold, that he would live to the age of ninety; that he would become an illustrious bishop, and render important services to religion. As he grew up, he was placed under the care of excellent masters, and applied himself with great success to the study of greek and latin,

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philosophy, and the civil and canon law. He had also a taste for drawing and music, and acquired some skill in each. He was well instructed in the principles of his religion, and punctual in the discharge of all its obligations. At all the public services of the church he was a regular attendant, and very frequently approached the holy communion.

After having succeeded to admiration in his studies, he embraced the profession of the law, at the age of sixteen. The purity of his morals, and his inviolate honour, united to his great talents and active mind, procured him universal esteem; and his parents justly flattered themselves, that he would attain the highest eminence and reputation in his profession. His success justified their hopes; it was equally honourable and rapid; and he was advancing to the highest degree of professional distinction, when he suddenly resolved to abandon all his temporal prospects, and to devote himself to the service of God in the ecclesiastical state.

At first he met with many obstacles. His family, his friends, and even some of the most distinguished members of the Neapolitan government strenuously opposed his design; but he was not to be moved. However, in order that he should not undertake such, so important an affair, without due consideration, he long and seriously reflected upon it in solitude; and, in order to ascertain the will of heaven, he made a spiritual retreat. Feeling himself encouraged from above to prosecute his design, he took the clerical habit, 31st August, 1722, and from thence his greatest delight was to be found in the church, and at the hospital, and in the practice of the rudest austerities.

He received the tonsure on the 23d of Septem-

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ber, 1724; and placed himself under certain holy priests, who laboured in country missions, and formed young ecclesiastics for the zealous discharge of missionary duties.

He received the holy order of priesthood in 1726, and at once commenced his apostolic career. His time was divided between the confessional and the pulpit; and his labours were crowned with abundant fruit. Whenever he gave a mission, great crowds were attracted by the reputation of his sanctity, and his hearers testified by sighs and tears the wonderful effects of his preaching.

Perceiving the great utility of the missionary labours in which he and his zealous companions were engaged, and anxious to impart the truths of salvation to the country people, whose ignorance he lamented, he resolved to found an order of apostolic missionaries, who should spread themselves over the adjoining territories, and preach the truths and duties of the gospel. For this purpose, on the 8th November, 1732, he laid the foundation of his institute, under the titlē of *The Congregation of our most Holy Redeemer*, at Scala, in the district of Benevento. The rules and observances were nearly the same as those of the order founded in France, by St. Vincent of Paul, in the preceding century. At first, the number of his associates was small, but their lives were so edifying, and useful, that their number rapidly increased, and in 1742, they began to make simple or private vows. By these, they obliged themselves to obey the superior of the order, and they elected Liguori to that office. These holy missionaries distinguished themselves by so much zeal, activity and prudence, that applications for them were made from every quarter of Italy, and in spite of many contradictions the new society

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was solemnly approved by a rescript of Benedict XIV. on the 25th of February, 1749.

The difficult task of governing a numerous community of persons of different ages and dispositions, was discharged by Liguori with great prudence and zeal, and in a manner, which produced the happiest results, both to the community and the public. He recommended to those under his care prompt and entire obedience, and the most perfect humility, and he enforced his instructions by his example. He frequently employed himself in subordinate, and even menial offices, under the directions of the superiors of the different departments of the society. He particularly inculcated a strict observance of evangelical poverty, and took care that the spirit of poverty should pervade every part of the college of his congregation. He was very attentive to the sick, and was wont to say, that 'no members are so useful to a congregation as the sick and infirm, as none more feelingly invite the other members to a frequent and heroic exertion of virtue, or draw down upon them greater blessings from heaven.'

He inculcated to the members of his congregation a strict attention to charity, both amongst themselves, and in respect to others. 'The world,' he used to observe, 'is never so much scandalized as when they see a priest neglect this duty.' His conduct proved how deeply he felt the truth of this observation.—He was slow in judging unfavourably of others—when their failings or offences admitted no doubt, and called for his reproof, the language in which he expressed it, was rather that of admonition than of censure; a harsh or sarcastic expression never fell from his lips. His exertion to serve his neighbour, both

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in his spiritual and temporal wants, were boundless; throughout his long life he seemed to live entirely for others.

But while he was thus attentive to his neighbour, he did not forget his own sanctification. Having chosen what the author of the *Imitation of Christ* calls the Royal Road of the Cross, he walked in it to the end of his mortal course with a fervour that never cooled, and a perseverance that never faltered. He spent a considerable portion of his time every day in prayer and meditation on the mysteries of faith. He particularly dwelt on the life and death of Christ, and had the most tender devotion to Jesus present in the Holy Eucharist, and to his Sacred Heart. It pleased the Almighty to call him to the sublimest heights of holy contemplation, but they had been preceded by vigorous and unceasing efforts to purify his heart from every irregular affection, by long prayer and continual austerities.

The fame of his virtues induced many dioceses in Italy to desire him for their pastor, and several bishoprics were proposed to him, which he uniformly rejected. At length Pope Clement XIII. named him Bishop of St. Agatha of the Goths, a suffragan see of the archbishopric of Benevento. He used every effort to decline the charge, and an express command from his holiness alone induced him to accept the mitre. He was consecrated on the 12th of June, 1762, and on the 11th of July in the same year took possession of his see. He immediately gave missions in every part of his diocess, and considerably increased the number of the members of his congregation. He made frequent pastoral visits of the whole of his diocess, instructed and catechised the ignorant, established parishes, enforced the regularity of

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his clergy, and practised every other episcopal duty. Although poor, abstemious, mortified and austere, as far as himself was concerned, he was most kind to all others, and particularly charitable to the poor. In the famine which afflicted Naples in 1764, he sold every thing that belonged to him, including his plate, the buckles of his shoes, his ring and pectoral cross, and distributed the produce among the poor.

He never lost a moment of his precious time, and hence found leisure in the midst of all his employment to compose a multitude of works on dogmatic and moral theology and piety. The number of his writings amounts to one hundred, or upwards, all of which, after the most rigorous examination, were solemnly approved of by the sacred congregation of Rites, whose sentence was confirmed by Pius VII. in 1803.

Such was the sanctity of this great servant of God, that his confessors declared, he had not only preserved his baptismal innocence, but even that he had never, *deliberately*, committed a venial sin. "That which most of all contributed to preserve his innocence," says one of his biographers, "was his tender devotion to the Blessed Virgin, to whom he was specially consecrated." Filled with love for, and confidence in Mary, he addressed himself to her in all his wants, and felt quite assured of obtaining all he asked, through her intercession. We may compare him to St. Bernard, by the sweetness of his expressions, and the abundance of his sentiments in celebrating Mary's greatness, by word and writing. Whenever he preached in her honour, his auditory was most numerous; the most obstinate were converted; and was often seen so transported by his subject, as to be raised in ecstacy from the earth.

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He petitioned Clement XIV. for permission to resign his diocess, but though he alleged declining health as his motive, his holiness lent an unwilling ear to the petition. He was more successful with Pius VI. who with great unwillingness acceded to his request. He therefore resigned his see in 1775, and, without even the usual reservation of a pension, retired to a house of his order at Nocera de Pagani, and commenced his long and fervent preparation for eternity.

At the age of eighty-five his infirmities confined him first to his room, and afterwards to his bed. In this state he received every day the Holy Communion, and gave spiritual advice to those who resorted to him. With the exception of these employments he devoted his whole time to meditation and prayer. On the 1st of August, 1787, after a long life spent in the practice of every virtue, he committed his soul into the hands of his Redeemer, in the ninety-first year of his age.

The nobility and gentry of his diocess, and the adjoining parts of Italy, popes, cardinals, bishops, princes, and magistrates, expressed the highest opinion of his eminent virtues, both during his life, and after his decease. Hence the most urgent appeals were made to Pius VI. to commence the process of his canonization: and the first steps towards that purpose were taken within a year after the saint's death. The Holy Father in his Brief for commencing the proceedings said, that he loved Liguori during life, and observed in him the most extraordinary piety and devotion.

After the approval of his works succeeded the examination of the virtues of Liguori. The proofs were so satisfactory, that the Pope dispensed with the Bull of Urban VIII. which forbade this spe-

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cial scrutiny to be made until fifty years after death. The cardinals were unanimous in declaring, that the virtues of the deceased had attained the heroic degree, and their decision was confirmed by the Pope on the 7th of May, 1807.

On the 6th of September, 1816, Pope Pius VII. promulgated the Bull of his Beatification, the process of which declares, that more than one hundred miracles were performed by the saint during his life, and twenty-eight after death.

Pope Leo XII. on the 19th of February, 1825, addressed a Brief to the editor of the works of Liguori, which was accompanied by a golden medal. All his writings, and particularly his moral theology, are in the highest repute at Rome.

At length the Brief for his canonization was published by his late holiness, Pope Pius VIII. on the 11th of May, 1830, in the forty-third year after his death.

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ON

Divine Love,

AND THE

MEANS OF ACQUIRING IT.

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ON DIVINE LOVE

AND

THE MEANS OF ACQUIRING IT.

1. Our good God loves us with a great love, and, because he so loves us, has a great desire that we should love him. Hence he not only calls on us to love him by repeated invitations in the holy scriptures, and by numberless benefits, general and particular, but would even oblige us to love him by an express precept, threatening hell to those who love him not, and promising heaven to those who do love him. He desires that all should be saved, and that none should be lost, as is most clearly shown by St. Peter and St. Paul; for, say they—'The Lord..... dealeth patiently for your sake, not willing that any should perish, but that all should return to penance'. 2 St. Peter iii. 9. 'Who will have all men to be saved'. 1 Tim. ii. 4. But if God desires that all should be saved, why did he create hell? He created hell, not that we might be damned, but that we might be induced by the fear of it to love

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him. If he had not created hell, who would have loved him? If, notwithstanding the existence of hell, the greater part of men choose rather to be consigned to its torments than to love God; had there been no hell, I repeat, who would have loved him? He therefore threatens with eternal torments those who do not love him, in order that as they will not voluntarily love him, they may at least, being constrained by the fear of hell, be as it were forced to love him.

2. O God! how fortunate and how honoured would that man esteem himself to whom his king should say, "Love me, because I love you." A prince would be very careful not to debase himself so much as to act thus towards one of his vassals; but God, who is infinite goodness, the Lord of all, omnipotent, all-wise, who is most worthy of infinite love, who has enriched us with his spiritual and temporal blessings, he disdains not to solicit our love, to exhort and command us to love him, and yet cannot prevail upon us to give him our hearts. What does he require of each of us but to love him? 'What doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but that thou fear the Lord thy God..... and love him?' Deut. x. 12. The Son of God came into the world and dwelt amongst us, as he himself declares, that we might love God: 'I came to cast fire on the earth;

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and what will I but that it be kindled?' St. Luke xii. 49. We may observe, with St. Thomas, on these words; 'and what will I but that it be kindled?' "it would seem as though God, who possesses in himself infinite felicity, could not be happy without our loving him."

3. We cannot therefore doubt whether God loves us, and that with the greatest love; or whether, so loving us, he desires that we should love him with our whole hearts. To each one of us he says, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart.' Deut. vi. 5. And he adds 'These words shall be in thy heart.....and thou shalt meditate upon them sitting in thy house, and walking on thy journey, sleeping and rising. And thou shalt bind them as a sign on thy hand, and they shall be and shall move between thy eyes. And thou shalt write them in the entry, and on the doors of thy house.' Deut. vi. 6—9. In these words is evinced how earnestly and ardently God desires that we should each of us love him. He desires that the injunction to love him with our whole hearts should be imprinted in our hearts; and that we may never forget it, he desires that we should meditate on it in our houses, on our journies, when we retire to rest and when we awake from sleep. He desires that we should bind it as a remem-

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brance on our hands, in order that, wherever we may be, it may present itself before our eyes; and hence, the Pharisees taking his words literally, carried it written on parchment in their right hands and bound it on their foreheads.

4. St. Gregory of Nyssa writes, "Blessed dart, which carries with it into the heart God who casts it." By which the holy Father would say, that when God pierces the heart with a dart of love, that is enables it by some special illumination to know his goodness and his love, and the desire which he has to be loved in return, he himself enters the heart with love's dart, being himself love and he who casts its darts: 'For', as St. John writes, 'God is charity,' 1 Ep. iv. 8. And as the dart remains fixed in the heart which it strikes, so God continues ever united with the soul which he penetrates with his love. O, let us ever be convinced that God alone really loves us. The love of parents, of friends, and of all others who say that they love us, except those who love us purely for God, is not real, but interested love, as it is from self-love that they love us. Yes, my God, I well know that thou alone lovest me and desirest my welfare, not for thine own interest, but solely through thy bounty and the love which thou bearest me; and I have been so ungrateful as to commit so many of-

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fences and injuries against no one, as I have committed against thee, who hast so much loved me. O Jesus, suffer me not to be thus any more ungrateful to thee. Thou hast truely loved me, and therefore do I desire truely to love thee for the remainder of my life. I will say to thee with St. Catharine of Genoa, "O love, never more will I commit sin, never more will I commit sin," thee only will I love, and no other.

5. St. Bernard says that the soul that really loves God, "cannot will anything but what God wills." Let us then beseech our Lord to pierce us with his holy love; since the soul that is thus affected knows not how to will, and cannot will anything but what God wills, and is entirely divested of all the desires of self-love. The being divested of self, with the giving of herself entirely to God, is the dart with which our Lord declares himself to be stricken by the soul, when he saith to the holy spouse, 'Thou hast wounded my heart, my sister, my spouse.' Cant. iv. 9.

6. How beautiful is the expression of the same St. Bernard, "*Discamus jaculari corda in deum;*" "Let us learn to cast our hearts into God." When the soul gives herself without reserve to God, she casts her heart like a dart into the heart of God, who then declares himself as it were taken

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and made prisoner by the soul that thus gives him herself. This is the exercise of those souls that are wholly given to God; in the prayers which they address to him, "they cast their hearts into God," they give themselves wholly to him, again and again, by repeating the following or similar ejaculations of love:

My God and my all: besides thee what do I desire!

To thee, O Lord, do I give my whole self; and if I know not how to give my whole self to thee as I ought, do thou of thyself take full possession of me.

Whom do I desire to love but thee, O Jesus, who hast died for me?

Draw me after thee: draw me out, O my Saviour, from the filth of my sins, draw me nigh to thee.

Bind me fast, O Lord, with the chains of thy love that I may never more be separated from thee.

I desire to be wholly thine. Hear me, O Lord, I desire to be wholly, wholly thine; do thou make me all thine own.

Whom do I desire but thee, my love, my all?

Since thou hast called me to thy love, give me strength to please thee in all things as thou desirest.

Whom do I desire to love but thee, who

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art infinite goodness and worthy of infinite love?

Thou hast inspired me with the desire of becoming wholly thine, complete what thou hast begun in me.

What do I desire in this world besides thee, who art my sovereign good?

I give myself without reserve to thee, do thou accept of me, and enable me to continue faithful to thee until death.

I desire te love thee during life, that I may love thee for all eternity.

Jesus, my joy, my bliss so great,
That I can love but thee:
Myself to thee I consecrate,
Do what thou wilt with me.

7. Happy indeed is that soul that can truly say, 'My beloved to me and I to him.' Cant. ii. 16. My God has given himself entirely to me, and I have given myself entirely to him; I am no longer my own, but belong entirely to my God. He who can say this with his whole heart, says St. Bernard, would willingly endure the pains of hell (if they could be endured without the loss of God) rather than for one moment be separated from him. O how rich a treasure is the treasure of divine love! Happy is he who possesses it! Let him take every care and do all in his power to preserve and increase it; and let him who does not as yet possess it, adopt every necessary means to acquire it.

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8. The first means is to divest ourselves of all earthly affections. In a heart filled with such affections, there is no room for the love of God; the more it gives itself to the earth, the less will it be influenced by divine love. If then we desire that our hearts should be filled with divine love, we must be careful to cast out earthly things entirely from them. If we would become saints we must imitate St. Paul, who to gain the love of Jesus Christ, despised all things else as dirt: 'I count all things.....but as dung, that I may gain Christ.' Phil. iii. 8. O, let us beseech the Holy Spirit to inflame us with his holy love, for then we shall despise and fear as vanity, smoke and dirt, all the riches, pleasures, honours and dignities of the earth, for which the greater part of men miserably forfeit their salvation.

9. The heart, into which divine love enters, no longer makes any account of all that the world esteems: 'If a man should give all the substance of his house for love, he shall despise it as nothing.' Cant. viii. 7. St. Francis of Sales, says, that when the house is on fire, all the goods are thrown out of the window; by which he means, that when the heart is inflamed with divine love, man, without sermons or exhortations from his spiritual director, of himself seeks to divest himself of all worldly goods, honours, riches,

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and all other earthly things, that he may love nothing but God. St. Catharine of Genoa, said, that she did not love God on account of his gifts; but loved his gifts in order to love him the more.

10. Gilibert writes, that, to a heart that loves God, it is a hard and insufferable thing to divide its love between God and the things of the world; to love, at the same time, God and creatures: "Oh, how hard for him that loves to divide his soul between Christ and the world!" St. Bernard says, that divine love is insolent, and by insolent he means, that it will not suffer any thing to divide it with God, since God must have all for himself. Does then God require too much in demanding of the soul her entire love? "Sovereign loveliness," observes St. Bonaventure, "ought to be loved exclusively of all things else." Infinite loveliness, infinite bounty, deserving of infinite love, such as is God, justly require that he alone should be loved by the heart which he has himself created to love him, and, that it might love him alone, has, as St. Bernard expresses it, *expended* himself. So that each one of us, when thinking of Jesus Christ, may truly, and ought indeed to say with St. Bernard: "For my sake thou hast completely expended thyself;" seeing that for each one of us he has sacrificed his

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whole life and shed his most sacred blood, and died of torments on a cross, and, that besides dying for us has left us his body, his soul, and his whole self, in the sacrament of the altar, to be the food and nourishment of our souls, that so each one of us may be entirely united with him.

11. Happy the soul, writes St. Gregory, which arrives at such a state, that all things become for it insupportable which are not God, whom alone it loves. Hence, we should be carefully on our guard against placing our affections on creatures, lest they should rob us of part of that love of which God claims the whole for himself. And although these affections may be good in themselves, such as we have for our parents and friends, still we must attend to what St. Philip Neri says, that as much of our love as we give to creatures, so much we take from God.

12. We should therefore render ourselves gardens closed up, as the sacred spouse is called by our Lord in the Canticles: "My sister, my spouse is a garden enclosed.' iv. 12. The soul that closes the door of her heart to all earthly affections is called a garden enclosed. When then any creature would enter and take possession of a share in our affections, we should refuse it admittance, and turn ourselves to Jesus Christ and say, "O Jesus, thou alone art my all, and I desire

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to love no other but thee. Thou art the God of my heart and my portion forever. My God, thou alone shalt be the Lord of my heart, thou alone my love." Thus let us never cease to call upon God to bestow on us the grace of his pure love; for, as St. Francis of Sales writes, "The pure love of God consumes every thing which is not God, and converts every thing into itself."

13. The second means of acquiring divine love is to meditate on the passion of our Lord Jesus Christ. On this point, dear reader, you would do well to read the book which I lately published, entitled, "Reflections on the Passion of Jesus Christ," in which are displayed at length the sufferings which our Saviour endured for us. It is certain that one cause why Jesus Christ is so little loved in the world, is the negligence and ingratitude of Christians in not reflecting, at least occasionally, on how much Jesus Christ has suffered, and the love with which he has suffered for them. "It hath seemed folly," says St. Gregory, "that God should die for us," yet is it of faith that has done so: 'Christ.....hath loved us, and hath delivered himself for us.' Eph. v. 2; and hath been pleased to shed his blood to wash away our sins: 'He hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood.' Apoc. i. 5.

14. "Thou hast so loved me, O my God,"

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says St. Bonaventure, "that thou seemest to have hated thyself." And he has been pleased that we should even feed on him in the holy Communion. Speaking of this most holy Sacrament, St. Thomas devoutly complains, that God has humbled himself towards us as though he were our servant, and each one of us his God.

15. Hence the Apostle takes occasion to say, 'The charity of God presseth us,' 2 Cor. v. 14; that is, obliges, and as it were, forces us to love him. O God, what do not men do for the love of some creature on which they have fixed their affections? And is a God of infinite bounty, of infinite beauty, and who has even died upon a cross for each one of us, so very little loved? O let us imitate the Apostle who said, 'God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.' Gal. vi. 14. What greater glory said this great Apostle, can I hope for in this world, than to have had a God to shed his blood and to die for the love of me? And this should every one say who has faith; and if he has faith, how can he love any thing but God? O God, how can it be possible that any soul contemplating Jesus crucified, fastened with three nails, hanging from the wounds of his hands and feet, and dying of pure grief and agony for the love of us, should not feel itself irresistably

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drawn and constrained to love him with all its powers?

16. The third means of arriving at the perfection of divine love, is to conform ourselves in all things to the holy will of God. St. Bernard says, that he whose love is perfect, cannot will any thing but what God wills. Many say, indeed, that they are quite resigned to whatever God pleases, but when any adversity happens to them, or troublesome infirmity, they can no longer preserve themselves in peace and tranquillity. But it is not so with those who are really conformed to the divine will; they say, "Thus it pleases, or, thus hath it pleased him whom I love," and are immediately composed and tranquil. "All things," says St. Bonaventure, "are sweet to holy love." Such souls as these know, that whatever happens in the world, is either commanded or permitted by Almighty God; and hence, whatever befalls them, they humble themselves, and live contentedly under the appointments of heaven. And although God does not will that others should persecute and injure us, yet for wise and just purposes, he wills that we should patiently suffer such persecution and injury, however painful they may be to us.

17. St. Catharine of Genoa said: "If God had placed me in the depths of hell, I would have said: *It is good for us to be here.* I

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would have said, I am content to be here by the will of him whom I love, who loves me more than all others, and knows what is best for me." Really to rest is to rest in the hands of the divine will.

18. St. Teresa says: "All that should be sought for in the exercise of prayer, is conformity of our will with the divine will, in which consists the highest perfection."—Hence we should frequently repeat that prayer of holy David: 'Teach me to do thy will.' Ps. cxlii. 9. Lord, as thou desirest my salvation, teach me ever to do thy will. The most perfect act of love, of which the soul is capable, is that which St. Paul made when he was converted and said: 'Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?' Acts ix. 6. Make known to me, O Lord, what thou requirest of me, and I will accomplish it. Such an act is of more value than numberless fasts and disciplines. The accomplishment of the divine will ought to be the object of all our actions, desires and prayers. For this, we should frequently beg the prayers of the Blessed Virgin, our patron saints, and our Angel guardians, that we may obtain the grace of doing in all things the will of God. And when any thing happens to us contrary to our own self-love, we should make an act of resignation; by so doing we should gain treasures of merit: let us there-

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fore accustom ourselves to repeat, on such occasions, those words which Jesus himself has taught us by his own example: 'The chalice which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it? Yea, Father, for so it hath seemed good in thy sight.' St. Luke x. 21. O Lord, as it hath pleased thee, so doth it also please me; or, let us say with holy Job: 'As it hath pleased the Lord, so it is done, blessed be the name of the Lord.' Father John of Avila says: "One act of thanksgiving, when things go wrong with us, is worth a thousand thanks when things are agreeable to our inclinations." And here I must repeat, really to rest is to rest in the hands of the divine will; for then is verified that declaration of the Holy Ghost: 'Whatsoever shall befall the just man, shall not make him sad.' Prov. xii. 21.

19. The fourth means of acquiring divine love, is meditation. Eternal truths cannot be discerned by the eyes of the body, like material things, but can only be discerned by thought and consideration; hence if we do not occasionally reflect on the truths of eternity, and particularly on the obligation of loving God as he deserves, for all the benefits which he has bestowed upon us, and for all the love which he has shown us, we shall find it difficult to detach our affections from creatures, and to give our whole love

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to God. It is in meditation that God makes known the nothingness of all earthly things and the value of such as are heavenly; and it is in meditation that he inflames those souls with his love who do not resist his calls.

20. Many complain that when they meditate they do not find God. They do not find him because they seek him with hearts full of the earth. "Detach the heart from creatures," says St. Teresa, "and then, when you seek God, you will find him." 'The Lord is good,' saith the Prophet Jeremias, ..."to the soul that seeketh him.' Lam. iii. 25. In order therefore to find God in meditation, the soul must divest herself of all affection to earthly things, and then God will speak to her: 'I will lead her into solitude and I will speak to her heart.' Osee ii. 14. But to find God, as St. Gregory observes, not only the solitude of the body but the solitude of the heart is necessary. Our Lord one day said to St. Teresa: "I would willingly speak to many souls, but the world makes so much noise in their hearts, that my voice could not be heard." When the soul is really detached from all things but God, and presents herself in meditation before him, he then indeed speaks to her and makes known to her the greatness of his love for her; and the soul, says a pious author, burning with holy love, speaks not; but

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in her silence, how much does she say! "The silence of love," writes this author, "says more to God than all human eloquence; every sigh discloses her whole interior." Then she cannot often enough repeat: *My beloved to me, and I to him.*

21. The fifth means of acquiring an eminent degree of divine love is prayer. We are poor and possessed of nothing, but by prayer we may become rich in all things; for God has promised to hear every one that prays to him. He says: 'Ask, and it shall be given to you.' St. Matt. vii. 7. What more can a man say to his friend than ask of me what you will and I will give it you? This is what our Lord says to each of us. God, and the Lord of all, promises to give us what we ask for; if then we are poor, the fault is our own, because we ask not for the graces which we stand in need of. And hence meditation is morally necessary for all; because, without meditation, when we are engaged in worldly affairs, we think but little of the soul; but when we give ourselves to meditation, we discover the wants of our souls, ask for graces and obtain them.

22. The Saints spent their whole lives in meditation and prayer: and all the graces, by which they became Saints, they obtained through prayer. If then we desire to become Saints, and to be saved, we must ever stand

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and pray at the gates of the divine mercy, and ask for all we want as for an alms. Is humility necessary for us? let us ask for it and we shall become humble. Is patience necessary for us, in the time of tribulation? let us ask for it and we shall become patient. Do we desire divine love? let us ask for it and we shall obtain it. *Ask and it shall be given to you*, is the promise of God, which cannot fail. And Jesus Christ, in order to give us greater confidence in prayer, has promised us, that, whatever graces we ask of the Father in his name, or for the love of him, or on account of his infinite merits, the Father will grant them to us: 'Amen, Amen, I say to you: if you ask the Father any thing in my name he will give it you.' St. John xvi. 23. And in another place he says, that whatever we seek for from him, in his name and through his merits, he will accomplish for us: 'If you shall ask any thing in my name, that I will do.' St. John xiv. 14. Yes, for it is of faith that whatever God is able to do, Jesus Christ is able to do, because he is the Son of God.

23. However cold the soul may be in divine love, if it have faith, I know not how it can fail to be urged to love Jesus Christ, by even cursorily considering what the sacred Scriptures say of the love which Jesus Christ has shown us in his passion and in the most

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holy Sacrament of the altar. Of his passion, Isaias says: 'Surely he hath borne our infirmities, and carried our sorrows,' liii. 4; and in the following verse: 'But he was wounded for our iniquities, he was bruised for our sins.' So that it is of faith that Jesus Christ was pleased to suffer the pains and sorrows which were due to us. And why did he do this, but for the love which he bore us? 'Christ loved us,' saith St. Paul, 'and delivered himself for us.' Eph. v. 2. And St. John says: 'He hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood.' Apoc. i. 5. Of the Sacrament of the blessed Eucharist, Jesus himself, when he instituted it, said to us all: 'Take ye and eat: this is my body.' 1. Cor. xi. 24. And in another place: 'He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, abideth in me, and I in him.' St. John vi. 57. He who believes, how can he read these things and not be forced in some measure to love our Redeemer, who besides shedding his blood and sacrificing his life for the love of us, has also left us his sacred body and blood in the Sacrament of the altar, to be the food of our souls, and to be wholly united with us in the holy Communion?

24. One more short reflection on the passion of Jesus Christ. He shows himself to us, nailed to a cross, covered with blood, and agonizing in the sorrows of death. I

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ask why has Jesus shown himself to us in so pitiable a state? Was it for the sole purpose of exciting our compassion? No, it was not so much as to excite our compassion, as to gain our love. To know that he has loved us from all eternity, ought to have been more than sufficient to make us love him: 'I have loved thee with an everlasting love.' Jer. xxxi. 3. But our Lord seeing that this was not sufficient to overcome our tepidity, in order to induce us to love him as he desired to be loved, was pleased practically to demonstrate his love for us, by dying for the love of us covered with wounds upon a cross, to teach us by his sufferings the immense and tender love which he bore us. This is well expressed by St. Paul, when he says: 'He hath loved us, and hath delivered himself for us.' Eph. v. 2.

PRAYER OF ST. BONAVENTURE TO JESUS CHRIST, TO OBTAIN HIS HOLY LOVE.

Most sweet Jesus, pierce the interior of my soul with the sweet wound of thy love, that my soul may ever languish and be dissolved with thy love and with the desire of possessing thee: and long to quit this life, that it may come to be perfectly united with thee in a blessed eternity. Grant that my

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soul may ever thirst after thee, speak only to thee, find thee, and do all for thy glory. Grant that my heart may be ever fixed on thee who art my only hope, my riches, my peace, my refuge, my confidence, my treasure, and my inheritance.

PRAYER TO THE EVER BLESSED VIRGIN, TO OBTAIN THE LOVE OF JESUS AND A HAPPY DEATH.

O Mary, thou who so much desirest to see Jesus loved, if thou lovest me this is the favour which I now ask of thee, to obtain for me a great love for Jesus Christ. Thou obtainest from thy Son whatever thou pleasest: pray then for me, and console me. Obtain for me a great love for thee, who of all creatures art the most loving and beloved of God. And through that grief which thou sufferedst on Calvary, when thou didst behold Jesus expire on the cross, obtain for me a happy death, that by loving Jesus and thee, my Mother, I may come to love you forever in heaven.

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OUR whole perfection consists in loving our most amiable God: 'Charity is the bond of perfection.' Coloss. iii. 14; and all the perfection of the love of God consists in uniting our will with his most holy will. "The principal effect of love," says St. Dionysius, (*de Div. Nom.* c. 4.) "is to unite the wills of those who love, so as to make of them but one and the same will." Hence the more any one is united with the divine will, the greater will be his love. Mortifications, meditations, communions, and works of charity towards our neighbour, are indeed pleasing to God, but when? When they are performed according to his will; but when they are not influenced by the will of God, they are not only not pleasing to him, but hateful, and deserve only punishment. If a master had two servants, one of whom toiled through the day without ceasing, but would do every thing in his own way, while the other toiled

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and was obedient to his master, assuredly the master would love the second rather than the first. How can our actions promote the glory of God, when they are not according to his good pleasure? The Lord, said the Prophet to Saul, desires not sacrifices, but obedience to his wishes: 'Doth the Lord desire holocausts and victims, and not rather that the voice of the Lord should be obeyed?.....It is like the crime of idolatry to refuse to obey.' 1 Kings xv. 22, 23. He who labours according to his own will and not according to the will of God, commits a species of idolatry; because instead of adoring the divine will, he, in a certain way, adores his own.

The greatest glory then that we can give to God, is to fulfil his blessed will in all things. Our Redeemer, who came on earth to promote the divine glory by accomplishing the divine will, came principally to teach us by his example to do so likewise. Hear how St. Paul introduces him as speaking to his Eternal Father: 'Sacrifice and oblation thou wouldest not: but a body thou hast fitted to me.....Then said I: Behold I come that I should do thy will, O God.' Heb. x. 5, 9. Thou hast refused the victims which men offered thee; and hast desired that I should sacrifice to thee the body which thou hast given me; behold me ready to do

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thy will. And he frequently declared that he came not to do his own will but that of his Father: 'I came down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him that sent me.' St. John vi. 38. And in this, he wished that the world should know the love which he had for his Father, in his obedience to his will, which was that he should be sacrificed upon the cross for the salvation of men: hence, in the garden, when he advanced to meet his enemies who came to apprehend him for the purpose of putting him to death, he said: 'That the world may know that I love the Father: and as the Father hath given me commandment, so do I: Arise, let us go hence.' St. John xiv. 31. And in this, in the doing of the divine will, he said that he recognised who was his brother: 'Whosoever shall do the will of my Father that is in heaven, he is my brother.' St. Matt. xii. 50.

This has ever been the end which all the Saints have had constantly in view: the accomplishment of the will of God; well knowing that in this consisted all the perfection of the soul. The Blessed Henry Susone said: "God does not desire that we should abound in spiritual lights, but that in all things we should submit to his will." And St. Teresa: "All that should be sought for in the exercise of prayer is conformity of our will with

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the divine will; assuredly in this consists the highest perfection. He who excels most in this practice will receive greater gifts from God, and will make the most progress in perfection." The Blessed Stephana da Soncino, a Nun of the order of St. Dominic, being one day conducted in a vision into heaven, saw some persons who had died and whom she knew, placed among the Seraphim, and was told that they had been raised to so high a degree of glory on account of their perfect uniformity, while on earth, with the will of God. And the above-mentioned B. Susone, speaking of himself, said: "I would rather be the vilest worm on earth, with the will of God, than a Seraph with my own."

We in this world must learn from the Saints in heaven how we are to love God. The pure and perfect love which the Blessed in heaven have for God, consists in the perfect union of themselves with his holy will. If the Seraphim understood it to be his will that they should be employed for all eternity in raising heaps of sand on the sea shore, or in the meanest employment on earth, they would do it with the utmost delight. Nay more; if God should signify to them that they should burn in the fire of hell, they would immediately cast themselves down into that abyss to do the divine will. And Jesus Christ teaches us to pray that we may

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do the will of God on earth as the Blessed do in heaven: 'Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.' St. Matt. vi. 10.

Our Lord called David a man according to his own heart, because David did his will: 'I have found David.....a man according to my own heart, who shall do all my wills.' Acts xiii. 22. David was always prepared to embrace the divine will, as he himself declares: 'My heart is ready, O God, my heart is ready.' Ps. lvi. 8. And all that he asked of the Lord, was to teach him to do his will: 'Teach me to do thy will.' cxlii. 10. One act of perfect uniformity with the divine will is sufficient to make a saint. Witness a St. Paul; while yet a persecutor of the Church, he was enlightened and converted by Jesus Christ: upon which, how did he proceed? what did he say? All he did was to offer himself to the divine will, saying: 'Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?' Acts ix. 6. And behold our Lord declared him to be a vessel of election and an Apostle of the Gentiles: 'This man is to me a vessel of election, to carry my name before the Gentiles.' Acts ix. 15. It was because he who gives his will to God, gives him every thing; he who gives him his property in alms, his blood in disciplines, his food in fasts, gives to God a part of what he possesses; but he who gives him his will, gives

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him the whole; and hence he is able to say: Lord, I am poor, but I give thee all I have; giving thee my will, I have nothing more that I can give thee. But this indeed is all that God expects from us: 'Son, give me thy heart.' Prov. xxiii. 1; that is, thy will. "We can make no offering," says St. Augustin, "so pleasing to God, as to say to him: take thou possession of us." We give our whole will to thee; make known to us what thou requirest of us, and we will accomplish it.

If then we would give full pleasure to the heart of God, we must endeavour to conform ourselves to his divine will, and not only conform ourselves, but make ourselves one with all his appointments. Conformity means our joining our will with the will of God; but uniformity means our making the divine will and our own will but one, so that we will nothing but what God wills, and God's will alone is our will. This is the summit of perfection, to which we should always aspire; this should be the object of all our actions, of all our desires, meditations and prayers. For this we should beg the assistance of the Saints our advocates, of our guardian Angels, and above all, of the most holy Mother of God, who was the most perfect of all the Saints, because she always most perfectly embraced the divine will.

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But the great thing is, to embrace the will of God in all things which happen, whether they be agreeable or disagreeable to our inclinations. In things which are agreeable, even sinners unite themselves with the will of God; but the Saints unite themselves with the divine will, even in things which are disagreeable and displeasing to self-love. In this is proved the perfection of our love for God. Father John of Avila said: "One act of thanksgiving, when things go wrong with us, is worth a thousand thanks, when things are agreeable to our inclinations."

Moreover we should not only unite ourselves to the divine will in adverse things which come directly from God, as infirmity, desolation of spirit, poverty, the death of relatives and the like; but in those also which come from creatures, such as contempt, loss of character, injustice, robberies and all kinds of persecutions. We should attend to this, when injured in reputation, honour or goods, that our Lord does not will the sin of those who injure us, but nevertheless wills our humiliation, our poverty, or mortification. It is certain and of faith, that nothing happens in the world but by the divine will. 'I am the Lord, forming the light and creating the darkness, making peace and creating evil.' Isa. xlv. 7. From the Lord come good and evil things; that is, all those things

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which are contrary to us, which we falsely call evil, for in truth they are good when we accept them from his hands: 'Shall there be evil in a city which the Lord hath not done?' saith the Prophet, Amos iii. 6. And the wise man says: 'Good things and evil, life and death, poverty and riches, are from God.' Eccl. xi. 14. It is true, as I have said, that when man unjustly offends you, God does not will his sin, nor concur in the malice of his will, but does indeed concur in the general concourse of the material actions, with which any one afflicts you, shames, or injures you, so that the offence which you suffer is assuredly willed by Almighty God, and comes to you from his hands. Thus the Lord told David that he would be the author of those injuries which David would receive from Absalom: 'I will raise up evil against thee out of thy own house, and I will take thy wives before thy face, and give them to thy neighbour.' 2 Kings xii. 11. Hence he said also to the Hebrews, that in punishment of their iniquity he would send the Assyrians to carry away their spoils and to ruin them: 'Wo to the Assyrian, he is the rod and the staff of my anger.....I will send him to take away the spoils.' Isa. x. 6. St. Augustin explains this: "their impiety was made the sword of God." God made use of the iniquity of the Assyrians as a

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sword to chastise the Hebrews. And Jesus himself said to St. Peter, that his death and passion would come to him not so much from men as from his own Father: 'The chalice which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?' St. John xviii. 11.

When the messenger (who is thought to have been the devil) came to tell Job that the Sabeans had taken away all his goods, and had slain his sons, what did the holy man answer? 'The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away.' i. 21. He did not say: the Lord gave me sons and property, and the Sabeans have taken them away; but, *The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away;* because he well knew that his loss had been willed by the Almighty; and hence he added: *As it hath pleased the Lord, so it is done: blessed be the name of the Lord.* We should not therefore, take our troubles as if they happened by chance, or came only from the malice of men, but we should be persuaded that whatever happens, happens to us by the divine will: "Know," says St. Augustin, "that whatever happens here contrary to your own will, does not happen but by the will of God." Epictetus and Atho (*Rosweid l.* 1.) two blessed martyrs of Jesus Christ, when put to the torture by the tyrant, torn with iron hooks, and burnt with torches, said only: "May thy will, O Lord,

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be done in us." And when they came to the place of execution, they exclaimed aloud: "Be thou blessed, O eternal God; because thy will is fully accomplished in us."

Cesarius relates (*lib.* 10. *cap.* 6.) that a certain Religious, although he was not at all different from others externally, was yet arrived at such sanctity that merely by the touch of his garments he healed those who were sick. His superior, wondering at this, asked him how he performed such miracles, although he did not lead a more exemplary life than others? The Religious answered, that he also was surprised at it and could not account for it. But what devotions do you practice, rejoined the Abbot? The good Religious answered, that he did but little, or rather nothing; except that he always took great care to will only what God willed, and that our Lord had given him the grace of entirely giving up his own will to the will of God. Prosperity, said he, does not elate me, nor does adversity cast me down: because I take all things as from the hands of God; and to this end I direct all my prayers, that his will may be perfectly accomplished in me. The superior replied: did you feel no resentment against the enemy who yesterday did us so much injury, in taking away our provisions and setting fire to our farm, and consuming our corn and cattle? No Father,

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was his answer: but on the contrary I gave thanks for it to God, as I am accustomed to do in similar misfortunes; knowing that God does, or permits, all for his own glory, and our greater good, and on this account I am always content whatever happens. Hearing this, the Abbot, seeing in him such uniformity with the divine will, no longer wondered at his performing such great miracles.

He who acts thus, not only becomes a saint, but also enjoys a perpetual peace. Alphonsus the Great, (*Panoun. in vita.*) King of Aragon, a most wise prince, being asked whom he esteemed to be the happiest man in the world, answered: he who gives himself up entirely to the divine will, and who receives all prosperous and adverse things as coming from the hands of God: 'To them that love God all things work together unto good.' Rom. viii. 28. Those who love God are always content, because all their pleasure is to fulfil the divine will even in adverse things, so that their very troubles are changed into delights, at the thought that by willingly accepting them they please their beloved Lord: 'Whatsoever shall befal the just man, it shall not make him sad.' Prov. xii. 21. And in fact what greater happiness can man experience than the accomplishment of all that he wishes? Now when a person wills only what

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God wills, let what will happen in the world, (except sin) as all happens by the will of God, he has whatever he wills or desires. It is related in the lives of the Fathers, of a countryman whose lands always produced more than his neighbours', that upon being asked how this happened, answered, that they ought not to be surprised at it, because he always had the seasons as he wished. "How so?" they asked. "Because," he replied, "I never wish for any other weather than what God sends me, and as I will what God wills, so he gives me the crops that I desire." Souls that are resigned, says Salvian, when they are humbled, will their own humiliation; when they suffer poverty, are willing to be poor: in a word, will all that happens to them; and, on this account, are always happy through life. If heat come, or cold, or rain, or wind, he who is united with the divine will says; I desire that it may be hot, or cold, or that it may rain because it is God's will. If poverty overtake him, persecution, infirmity or death, he says: I desire to be poor, persecuted, or infirm, because such is the will of God.

This is the glorious liberty which the sons of God enjoy, which is worth more than all the principalities and kingdoms in the world. This is the solid peace which the saints experience, which 'surpasseth all understand-

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ing.' Eph. iii. 2, and all the pleasures of sense, festivals, banquets, honours, and all worldly gratifications, which, because they are vain, and perishable, while they allure the senses and delight them for a few moments, afflict the spirit, in which alone real happiness can dwell. Hence Solomon, after having enjoyed to the utmost all worldly delights, exclaimed in affliction: 'But this also is vanity, and vexation of spirit.' Eccl. iv. 16. 'A fool,' says the Holy Spirit, 'Is changed as the moon; but a holy man continueth in wisdom as the sun.' Eccl. xxvii. 12. The fool, that is, the sinner, changes like the moon, which to-day increases, but to-morrow is on the wane: to-day he is cheerful, to-morrow sorrowful; to-day meek, to-morrow furious as a tiger: and why? Because his happiness depends upon the prosperity or adversity he may meet with, and hence he is changed as circumstances change around him. But the just man is as the sun, always equal in serenity whatever happens; because his happiness is in conformity with the divine will, and hence he enjoys an unalterable peace: 'And on earth peace to men of good will,' St. Luke ii. 25, said the angels to the shepherds. And who are the men of good will, but those who are always united with the divine will, which is always sovereignly good and perfect? 'The good,

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and the acceptable, and the perfect will of God.' Rom. xii. 2. It is such, because God cannot will any thing but what is best and most perfect.

The saints by their uniformity with the divine will enjoyed a heaven upon earth. The ancient Fathers, says St. Dorotheus, maintained within themselves a constant peace by receiving all things as coming from the hands of God. St. Mary Magdalen of Pazzi, at only hearing *the will of God* mentioned, was so consoled as to be wrapt into an extacy of love. Adverse things will not fail to give pain to the senses, but all this will take place only in the inferior part; but in the superior part, in the spirit, all will be peace and tranquility, because the *will* will be united with the will of God: 'Your joy,' said our Blessed Saviour to his Apostles, 'no man shall take from you.....Your joy shall be full.' St John xvi. 22, 24. He who is always in uniformity with the divine will, enjoys a full and perpetual peace; full, because he has all that he desires, as is said above; perpetual, because no one can deprive him of such joy, as no one can prevent whatever God wills.

Father John Thaulerus (according *to Father Sangiure Erar. tom.* 3. *and Father Nieremburg Vita Div.*) relates of himself, that having for many years prayed to our

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Lord, to direct him to some one who should teach him the true way of a spiritual life, one day heard a voice which said to him: go to such a church and you shall find the person you have asked for. He went to the church, and found at the gate a miserable beggar, barefoot and ragged, whom he saluted saying: good day, my friend. The poor man answered: I never, Sir, remember having had a bad day. The Father replied: God grant you a happy life; to which the other answered: I have never been unhappy. And he added: Father, it was not by accident that I said that I had never had a bad day, because when I am hungry I praise God: when it snows or rains I bless him; if any one treats me with contempt, or drives me away, or if I meet with any other affliction, I always give glory to God. I said that I have never been unhappy, and this also is true; because I have always accustomed myself to will whatever God wills without reserve; hence whatever happens to me, whether sweet or bitter, I receive from his hands with gladness, as being best for me; and this makes me happy. And if God, said Thaulerus, should will your condemnation, what would you say? If such should be the will of God, replied the beggar, I would embrace our Lord with humility and with love, and I would cling to him so closely, that if

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he should cast me into hell, he would be obliged to go with me, and then I should be more happy in being with him in hell than if I enjoyed all the delights of heaven without him. Where have you found God, said the Father? I found him, answered the poor man, where I left creatures. Who are you?—I am a king. And where is your kingdom?—Within my own soul, where I keep all things in order; my passions obey reason, and my reason obeys God. At last Thaulerus asked him what had advanced him to such great perfection? He replied, silence; being silent with men in order to speak to God, and the union which I have kept up with our Lord, in whom I have found and still find all my peace. Such in a word was this poor man through his union with the divine will; he in his poverty was assuredly richer than all the monarchs of the earth, and happier in his sufferings than worldlings in the midst of all earthly pleasures. O how great is the folly of those who resist the divine will! They must indeed undergo troubles, because no one can ever hinder the fulfilment of the divine decrees. 'Who resisteth his will?' Rom. ix. 19. And they must undergo them without fruit, and also bring down upon themselves greater chastisements for the next life, and greater uneasiness in this: 'Who hath resisted

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him, and hath had peace?' Job ix. 4. If the sick man complains in his pains and infirmities, if the poor man in his miseries laments his lot before God, is enraged and blasphemes; to what does it serve but to exasperate his afflictions? "What seekest thou, O man," said St. Augustin, "when thou seekest for good things? Seek the one only good in which are all other goods." What seekest thou out of God? Seek and find him; unite and bind thyself to his will, and thou shalt live always happy in this life and in that to come.

And, in a word, what else does God will but our good? Whom shall we find that loves us more than God? His will is not only that no one should be lost, but that all should become saints and should be saved; 'Not willing that any should perish, but that all should return to penance.' 2 Peter iii. 9. 'This is the will of God your sanctification.' 1 Thes. iv. 3. God has placed his own glory in our good; because being "in his nature infinite bounty," as St. Leo says, and bounty of its own nature desiring to diffuse itself, God has a sovereign desire to make us partakers of his goodness and felicity. And if he sends us tribulations in this life, he sends them all for our good: 'All things work together unto good.' viii. 28. Even chastisements, as the holy Judith says, come not for

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our ruin, but for our amendment and salvation: 'Let us believe that these scourges of the Lord have happened for our amendment and not for our destruction.' Judith viii. 27. Our Lord to save us from eternal evils, surrounds us with his good will: 'O Lord, thou hast crowned us, as with a shield of thy good will.' Ps. v. 13. He not only desires, but is solicitous for our welfare: 'The Lord is solicitous for me.' Ps. xxxix. 18. And what, says St. Paul, will ever be denied to us by God, who has given us his own Son? 'He that spared not even his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how hath he not also, with him, given us all things?' Rom. viii. 32. With confidence, therefore, ought we to resign ourselves to the divine appointments, as being all for our good: 'In peace, in the self same I will sleep, and I will rest: because thou, O Lord, hast singularly settled me in hope.' Ps. iv. 9, 10. Let us therefore, place ourselves entirely in his hands, because he will certainly have care of us: 'Casting all your care upon him, for he hath care of you.' 1 St. Peter v. 7. Let us then think of God, and of the fulfilment of his will, that he may think of us and of our welfare. Daughter, said our Lord, to St. Catharine of Sienna, think of me and I will always think of thee. Let us frequently say with the sacred Spouse: 'My beloved to

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me, and I to him.' Cant. ii. 6. My beloved thinks of my good; I will think of nothing else but to please him, and to unite myself in all things to his holy will. The holy Abbot Nilus said, that we should never pray to our Lord for the success of what we wish for, but for the accomplishment of his holy will in us. And when things that are adverse happen to us, let us accept them all from the hands of God, not only with patience, but with gladness, after the example of the Apostles, who 'went from the presence of the council rejoicing, that they were accounted worthy to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus.' Acts. v. 41. What can be a greater happiness to the soul, than when suffering any trouble, to know that by suffering it with good will, she does that which of all things is the most pleasing to God? Masters of a spiritual life tell us, that although God is pleased with the desire which some souls have to suffer and to please him; nevertheless he is more pleased with the uniformity of those who desire neither to rejoice, nor to suffer, but being entirely resigned to his holy will, desire nothing but to fulfil it.

If then you desire to please God, and to live happily in this world, unite yourself always and in all things to the divine will. Reflect that all the sins of your past trou-

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bled and bitter life have happened because you have withdrawn yourself from the will of God. Embrace then henceforward the divine will, and say always whatever happens to you: 'Yea, Father, for so hath it seemed good in thy sight.' St. Matt. xi. 26. When you are troubled with any adverse event, think that it comes from God, and say immediately: Such is God's will; and with this be restored to tranquility. 'I was dumb, and I opened not my mouth, because thou hast done it.' Ps. xxxviii. 10. Lord, since thou hast done it, I speak not, and I accept of it. To this end you should direct all your thoughts and prayers, and endeavour ever to beseech God in meditation, in the holy communion, and in visits to the Blessed Sacrament, to enable you to do his will. And ever offer yourself to him, saying: O my God, here I am: do with me and with all things belonging to me as thou pleasest. This was a constant practice with St. Teresa: at least fifty times in the day this saint offered herself to our Lord to be disposed of as should be best pleasing to him.

Happy are you, dear reader, if you always do the same! you will certainly become a saint, and will lead a happy life to be closed by a happy death. When any one passes to the other life, all the hope that is conceived of his salvation, arises from knowing wheth-

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er he died with resignation. If you embrace all things in life as coming from the hands of God, and even death to fulfil his holy will, assuredly you will die a saint and will be saved. Let us then abandon ourselves in all things to the good will of that Lord, who, being most wise, knows what is best for us, and being most loving, since he has given his life for the love of us, wills also what is best for us. Let us then be certain and persuaded, says St. Basil, that God will procure our good without comparison better than we can ever do or desire.

But, let us proceed to consider in what things we should unite ourselves with the divine will.

1. We should unite ourselves with the will of God in natural things, which happen from without; as when it is very cold, or hot, or when it rains, or in the time of scarcity, or pestilence, and the like. We should be careful not to say: what intolerable cold! what horrible heat! what a misfortune! what an unhappy lot! what a wretched season! or to make use of any expressions which may show our repugnance to the will of God. We should will every thing as it is, because God disposes all things. St. Francis Borgia, going one night to a house of the Society, while it snowed, knocked at the gate many times; but the Fathers being asleep did not

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open it. When it was day, many of them lamented having made him wait thus outside the house; but the Saint told them that he had derived during the time great consolation from thinking that it was God who cast upon him the flakes of snow as they fell.

2. We should unite ourselves with the divine will in things which happen to us from within; as in hunger, thirst, poverty, desolation, and dishonour. In all we should ever say: Lord thou doest and undoest, I am content: I desire only what thou willest. And thus also, Rodriguez says, we should answer in those fancied cases which the devil puts into our minds, in order to make us fall into some wicked consent, or at least to disquiet us. If such a one should say to you such and such a word, if he should do such and such a thing to you, what would you say? what would you do? We should always answer: I would say and do what God should will. And thus we should free ourselves from all fault and trouble.

3. We should be particularly resigned in corporal infirmities, and should willingly embrace them in the manner and as long as God is pleased to visit us with them. We should make use of ordinary remedies for the restoration of health, because such is the will of God; but if these be of no avail, we should unite ourselves with the divine

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will, which will be of much more advantage to us than health. We should say on such occasions: Lord, I desire neither health nor sickness, I desire only the accomplishment of thy will. It is certainly greater virtue not to lament our afflictions in the time of pain and sickness: but when these are very heavy upon us, it is not wrong to describe them to our friends, and even to beseech God to free us from them. I mean in severe pains and sickness: because there are some who are so defective as, on occasion of the least indisposition or fatigue, to look for pity from every one. Even Jesus Christ, when entering upon his most bitter passion, made known his sorrows to his disciples: 'My soul is sorrowful even unto death.' St. Matt. xxvi. 38: and he besought his Father to deliver him from them: 'My Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from me.' Ibid 39. But Jesus himself taught us what we must do after such prayers, that is, resign ourselves immediately to the divine will, saying: *Nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.*

How foolish is it for persons to say that they wish for health, not so much that they may not suffer, but that they may do more for the service of God, by observing the rules, assisting the community, going to church, receiving the Holy Communion,

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doing penance, studying, labouring for the salvation of souls, hearing confessions, and preaching! But I ask: why do you desire to do these things? To please God? Why should you seek to please him in these things, when you know that it is not pleasing to him that you should practice your ordinary devotions, communions, penances, studies or sermons, but that you should suffer with patience the pains and infirmities which he sends you? Unite then your sufferings with those of Jesus Christ. But it grieves me to be so useless and such a burden to the community. Be conformed to the will of God, and be persuaded that your superiors are resigned to it, seeing that you are become a burden to the house, not through your own slothfulness, but by the will of God. Your desires and regrets do not proceed from the love of God, but from self-love, which seeks pretexts for departing from the will of God. Do we desire to please God? Let us say when confined to our beds, let us repeat only these words: *Lord thy will be done;* by which we shall please God more than by all the devotions and mortifications we could possibly offer him. There is no better way of serving God than joyfully to embrace his holy will. The Ven. Father Avilla (*Epist.* 2.) wrote to a priest that was ill: "Friend, do not trouble yourself about the good you

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would be able to do if you were well, but be willing to continue ill as long as it may please God. If you seek the will of God, why should you wish to be either well or ill? And certainly he might well say this, because God is not glorified by our works, but by our resignation and conformity to his blessed will. Hence St. Francis of Sales also said, that God is served more by suffering than by labour.

On many occasions medical attendants or medicines will be wanting, or the doctor will not understand our disorder. On such occasions we should unite ourselves to the divine will, which disposes all these things for our good. It is related of one who was devout to St. Thomas of Canterbury (*l.* 5, *c.* 1.) that being sick he went to the tomb of the Saint to obtain the recovery of his health. He recovered his health and returned into his own country; but then he said to himself: if my infirmity was of greater advantage to me for the working out my salvation, of what use will health be to me? With this thought he returned to the tomb, and besought the Saint to pray to God to grant him whatever might be most expedient for salvation; on which, he relapsed into his infirmity, and was quite content, being satisfied that God had thus afflicted him for his greater good. Surius relates the same of a

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blind man, who had recovered his sight through the intercession of St. Vedastus bishop; but who afterwards prayed that, if sight were not expedient for his soul, he might become blind again, and having prayed thus, became blind as before. When then we are sick or infirm, the best we can do is neither to seek for sickness, nor for health, but give up ourselves entirely to the divine will of God, that he may dispose of us as he pleases. But if we seek for health, we should always at least ask for it with resignation, and on condition that health of the body be expedient for the salvation of the soul, otherwise our prayer will be defective, and will not be heard, because God does not listen to those prayers which are not accompanied with resignation.

Infirmity is the touchstone of the soul; because infirmity or sickness discovers the character of the virtue which the soul possesses. If a person is not disquieted, does not complain, does not trouble, but obeys the medical attendants and superiors, and is perfectly tranquil, and quite resigned to the divine will, it is a sign that he possesses a fund of virtue. But what is to be said of a sick person who complains, and says that he is but little attended to? that his pains are insupportable? that nothing does him any good? that his physician is ignorant?

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and sometimes even complains that the hand of God presses too heavily upon him? St. Bonaventure, in the life of St. Francis, relates (*c.* 14.) that the Saint labouring under extraordinary sufferings, one of his Religious said to him: "Father, beg of God to deal with you more mildly: for his hand seems to press too heavily upon you." Hearing this, St. Francis answered with a loud voice: "If I did not know that what you say proceeds from simplicity, I would never see you again, for having dared to reprehend the judgments of God." Having said this, although very weak and extenuated from pain and illness, he threw himself out of bed upon the bare ground and kissing it said; "I thank thee, O Lord, for all the sufferings which thou dost send me. I beseech thee to send me still more, if it be thy blessed will. I desire that thou shouldest afflict me and not spare me in the least; for the accomplishment of thy will is the greatest consolation I can receive in this life."

To this we should also refer the loss which we sometimes suffer of persons who promote our temporal or spiritual advantage. Devout persons are often guilty of great defects in this point, by not resigning themselves to the divine appointments. Our sanctification must come not from our spiritual fathers, but from God. It is his will that we should

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avail ourselves of directors for the guidance of the soul, when he gives them to us; but when he takes them away, he would have us be content, and increase our confidence in his goodness, saying: Thou, O Lord gavest me this help, and thou hast now taken it away from me, blessed forever be thy holy will; but do thou thyself supply my wants and teach me what I must do to serve thee. And in like manner we should accept from the hands of God whatever other crosses he is pleased to send us. But so many sufferings, you say, are chastisements. I answer, are not the chastisements which God sends us in this life graces and benefits? If we have offended him, we must satisfy divine justice in some way, either in this life or in the next. Hence we should all say with St. Augustin; "Here cut, here burn, O Lord, provided thou spare me hereafter;" and with holy Job: 'Let this be my comfort, that afflicting me with sorrow, he spare not.' vi. 10. He who has deserved hell should indeed be consoled when he sees that God chastises him here; since this should give him great hopes that God will thereby free him from eternal punishment. Let us then say, when God sends us chastisements, what the High Priest Heli said: 'It is the Lord, let him do what is good in his sight.' 1 Kings iii. 18.

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Again, we should be resigned in desolation of spirit. Our Lord, when a soul first gives herself to a spiritual life, is accustomed to make her abound with his holy consolations, in order to wean her from worldly delights; but when he sees her more established in spirit, he withdraws his hand to prove her love for him, and to see if she will serve him here without the reward of sensible delights. "While we live here," says St. Teresa, "our gain is not in endeavouring to enjoy God, but in doing his will." And in another place: "The love of God does not consist in tenderness, but in serving him with fortitude and humility." And elsewhere: "God proves those who love him with aridities and temptations." Let then the soul thank our Lord when he is pleased to favour her with spiritual sweetness; but let her not be afflicted and impatient when he is pleased to leave her in desolation. We should pay great attention to this point; because some weak souls, when they experience spiritual dryness, think that God has abandoned them, or at least that they are not suited for a spiritual life, and, on this account, neglect prayer and lose the benefit of all they have done. There is no better time for the exercise of resignation to the will of God, than the time of spiritual dryness. I do not say that you may not feel pain at the loss of the

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sensible presence of your God; it is impossible not to feel it, or for the soul not to lament it, when our Blessed Redeemer himself lamented it on the cross: 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me.' St. Matt. xxvii. 46. But under such an affliction we should resign ourselves entirely to the will of our Lord. All the saints have suffered desolation and abandonment of spirit. "What hardness of heart," said St. Bernard, "do I experience! I no longer relish spiritual reading, nor meditation, nor prayer." For the most part, the saints have lived in a state of dryness and not of sensible consolations. These our Lord only rarely grants to weaker souls, that they may not halt in spiritual advancement: the delights of reward he prepares for us in heaven. This earth is the place of merit, where we merit by suffering; heaven is the place of reward and enjoyment. Hence, not sensible fervour with delight, but fervour of spirit with suffering was what the saints desired and sought for. The Ven. John of Avila said: (*Audi fil. c.* 26.) "Oh how much better it is to be in dryness and temptation with the will of God, than in contemplation without it!"

But you will say: if I knew that this desolation came from God, I should be satisfied; but what afflicts and disturbs me is the fear that it is occasioned through my own fault,

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and is a punishment for my tepidity. Well, do away with tepidity, and be more diligent. But perhaps, because you are in obscurity, you on this account are disquieted, are inclined to neglect prayer and spiritual exercises, and thus make the evil worse? Aridity may be sent you as a chastisement, as I have said; but is it not sent you by Almighty God? Accept of it therefore as a chastisement, which you have deserved, and attach yourself to the divine will. Do you not say that you have deserved hell? And now why do you lament? Is it because you deserve to receive consolations from God? Be then satisfied with the way in which God is pleased to treat you: continue your prayers, go forward with intrepidity, and for the future be afraid lest your complaints arise from a want of humility and resignation to the will of God. When a soul goes to prayer, she cannot derive any greater advantage from it than that of union with the divine will; hence be resigned and say: O Lord, I accept this pain from thy hands, and I accept it for as long as thou pleasest; if thou shouldest will me to continue thus afflicted for all eternity, I am content. And thus, this prayer, although painful, will be of more advantage to you than the sweetest consolations.

But we should bear in mind that spiritual

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dryness is not always a punishment, but appointed by Almighty God for our greater good and to keep us humble. In order that St. Paul might not become vain on account of the gifts which he had received, our Lord permitted him to be molested with temptations of impurity: 'And lest the greatness of the revelations should exalt me, there was given me a sting of my flesh, an angel of Satan to buffet me.' 2 Cor. xii. 7. He who prays with spiritual sweetness and delight, does but little. 'There is a friend, a companion at the table, and he will not abide in the day of distress.' Eccl. vi. 10. You would not consider as your true friend him who was your companion only when a guest at your table, but him who assisted you in your troubles without any advantage to himself. When God sends obscurity and desolation, it is to prove his true friends. Palladius having suffered great dryness in prayer, went to consult St. Marcarius, who said to him: "When the enemy tempts you to relinquish prayer, say to him: I should be content to remain here for the love of Jesus Christ, even to guard the walls of this cell." This must be your answer when you are tempted to discontinue prayer, because it seems to you a loss of time. Say on such occasions: "I am here to please God." St. Francis of Sales says that, if we do nothing else in

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prayer but drive away distractions and temptations, we pray well. Thaulerus also says, that to him who in the time of dryness perseveres in prayer, God will grant greater graces than to him who prays much and with great sensible devotion. Father Rodriguez relates of a certain man who said that for forty years he had never experienced any consolation in prayer; that on those days on which he prayed, he felt himself strong in virtues, but that when he did not pray as usual, he felt such weakness, as to be quite incapable of any thing good. St. Bonaventure and Gerson say, that many, by not having the recollection in prayer which they desire, serve God more than they would do if they had it; because this obliges them to be more diligent and humble; otherwise they might become negligent and proud at the thought of having found what they sought. And what is said of spiritual dryness, may be said also of temptations. We must endeavour to avoid temptations; but if God wills that we should be tempted, or permits it, either against faith, or purity, or any other virtue, we must not lament, but in this also resign ourselves to the divine will. To St. Paul, when he prayed to be delivered from impure temptations, our Lord replied: *my grace is sufficient for thee.* And thus, when God does not grant our petitions

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to be delivered from the temptations which molest us, let us say: Lord, do and permit what thou pleasest; thy grace is sufficient for me, but give me thy assistance that I may never forfeit it. It is not temptations, but consent to them, that robs us of divine grace. Temptations, when we resist them, keep us more humble, acquire for us greater merit, induce us to have more frequent recourse to God, and thus preserve us at a greater distance from offending him, and unite us more intimately to his holy love.

Finally, we should unite ourselves with the will of God as regards our death, both as to the time and manner in which God shall appoint its arrival. St. Gertrude (*l.* 1. *Vita c.* 11.) one day ascending a hill lost her footing and fell into a valley. Her companions asked her if she was not afraid of dying without the sacraments? To whom the Saint answered: I have a great desire to die with the sacraments, but I leave all to the will of God, because the best disposition for a good death, is to be willing to submit to whatever God shall appoint for us: hence I desire whatever kind of death our Lord shall be pleased to send me. St. Gregory relates in his Dialogues, (*l.* 3. *c.* 27.) that the Vandals having condemned a certain priest named Santolus to death, gave him permission to choose what kind of death he pleased.

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The holy man refused to choose, and said: I am in the hands of God, and will receive whatever death he shall permit you to inflict upon me, I desire no other but that. This act was so pleasing to our Lord, that these barbarians, having resolved on beheading him, the arm of the executioner was arrested in the act of striking; and these men being moved by such a miracle, granted him his life. Therefore as regards the manner, we must consider that as the best kind of death which God has appointed for us. Let us always say when we think of our death: Save us, O Lord, and then order our death as thou pleasest.

So also should we unite ourselves with the divine will as to the time of our death. What is this earth, but a prison in which we suffer and are in continual danger of losing God? This made David exclaim: 'Bring my soul out of prison.' Ps. cxli. 8. This made St. Teresa sigh for death. When she heard the clock strike, she was filled with consolation, at the thought that another hour of her life was past, another hour of the danger of losing God. Father Avila said that every one who was not in improper dispositions ought to desire death on account of the danger, during life, of losing divine grace. What can be more desirable and delightful than to secure for ourselves, by a

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good death, the impossibility of losing the grace and favour of our God? But, you say, I have as yet done nothing, and have acquired nothing for my soul. But if God should will you to die now, what would you do afterwards, if you should live contrary to the will of God? Who knows whether you would then make that happy end which you hope for? Who knows whether you would not change your will, fall into other sins and be lost? And then if you should do nothing else, as long as you lived, you would not be able to live without committing sins, at least light ones. "Why then," exclaims St. Bernard, "why do we desire life, in which, the longer we live, the more we sin." And it is certain that only one venial sin is more displeasing to God, than all the good works we can perform are pleasing to him.

I say moreover; that he who has but little desire of heaven, shows that he has but little love for God. He who loves, desires the presence of his beloved; but we cannot see God, if we do not leave the earth; and hence the saints have sighed for death, that they might go and behold their beloved Lord; thus sighed St. Augustin: "Would that I might die, that I might see thee!" thus St. Paul: 'Having a desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ.' Phil. i, 23; thus David: 'When shall I come and appear before the

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face of God.' Ps. xli. 3; and thus also all those souls that love God. A certain author relates, (*Flores. Emel. Graul.* 4, *c.* 68.) that a gentleman going one day to hunt in a forest, heard a man singing most sweetly; he stopped, and found a poor leper half putrified: he asked him if it was he who had been singing? Yes, replied the leper, it was I who was singing. And how could you be singing and content under so many afflictions and pains which are taking away your life? The leper answered: Between me, Sir, and God, there is nothing but this wall of clay, which is my body; remove this impediment, and I shall enjoy my God, and seeing that it is daily falling to pieces, I rejoice and sing.

Lastly, we should unite ourselves with the divine will as to our degrees of grace and glory: we should indeed esteem those things which belong to the glory of God, but we should esteem his will more: we should desire to love him more than the Seraphim; but we should not desire any degree of love, but that which our Lord has determined to bestow upon us. Father Avila says: (*Audi filia c.* 23.) "I do not believe that any of the saints did not desire to be better than what they were; but this did not disturb their peace, because they did not desire it from mere selfish motives, but for the sake of God, with whose distribution they were content,

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although he had given them less: esteeming it true love to be content with what God had given them, without desiring to have more." This means, as Rodriguez explains it, (*tratt.* 8, *cap.* 30.) that although we ought to be diligent in endeavouring to attain perfection as far as we are able, in order that we may not make our tepidity and laziness serve as excuses, as some do, who say; God must give it us; I can only do so much: nevertheless, when we fall short, we should not lose our peace of mind and uniformity with the divine will which has permitted our defect, nor lose courage; we should arise immediately from our fault, and humbly repent; and seeking greater help from God, pursue our course. Thus, in like manner, although we may desire to be exalted in heaven to the choirs of the Seraphim, not indeed that we may have greater glory, but to give greater glory to God, and to love him the more; yet we should be resigned to his holy will, contenting ourselves with that degree which in his mercy he shall deign to bestow on us.

It would then be a great fault to desire gifts of supernatural prayer, and particularly ecstacies, visions, and revelations. Masters of a spiritual life teach that, when souls are favoured with such things, they should pray to be deprived of them, that they may love

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God by the way of pure faith, which is the safest. Many have arrived at perfection without these supernatural favours; virtues alone raise the soul to sanctity, and principally uniformity with the will of God. And if God be not pleased to raise us to a sublime degree of grace and glory, we should conform ourselves to his holy will, beseeching him at least to save us through his mercy. If we do this, the reward will not be small which our good Lord will bestow upon us in his bounty, for he loves above all others those who are resigned to his appointments.

In a word, we should look upon all things which do and may happen to us as coming from the hands of God. And we should direct all our actions to this end alone—to do the will of God, and to do it because it is his will. And to do this more securely, we should depend upon the guidance of our superiors as to the exterior, and of our directors as to the interior, in order to know the will of God in our regard, having great confidence in those words of Jesus Christ: 'He that heareth you, heareth me.' St. Luke x. 16. And above all, we should be careful to serve God in the way in which he would have us serve him. I say this, in order that we may avoid the delusion of many, who entertain themselves with the thought that they are losing their time, saying: If I were

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in a desert, if I were to enter into a monastery, if I were any where else but here, at a distance from my relations and companions, I should become a saint; I should practice such great mortifications, and should be so much given to prayer. They say: I should do, I should do; but, in the meantime, by unwillingly bearing the cross which God is pleased to send them, in a word, by not walking in the way in which God would have them walk, they not only do not become saints, but make bad worse. These desires are often temptations of the devil; since they are not according to God's will: hence we should reject them, and encourage ourselves to serve God in that way only which he has chosen for us. By doing his will, we shall certainly become saints in every state of life in which our Lord may place us. Let us then always will only what God wills, and, doing this, he will press us to his bosom. For this end, let us make ourselves familiar with certain passages of scripture, which call on us to unite ourselves at all times with the divine will: *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* Tell me, O God, what thou requirest of me, and I will accomplish thy will in all things. 'I am thine, save thou me.' Ps. cxviii. 94 I am no longer my own, but thine, O Lord, do with me what thou pleasest. Particularly when any heavy ad-

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versity befals us, death of parents or friends, or the loss of goods or character: 'Yea Father,' let us always say, 'yea Father; for so hath it seemed good in thy sight.' St. Matt. xi. 26. Yes, my Father and my God, so be it done, for so has it pleased thee. Above all, let that prayer be dear to us which Jesus Christ has taught us. *Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.* Our Lord said to St. Catharine of Genoa, that whenever she said the *Pater-noster*, she should dwell particularly on these words, praying that she might accomplish his holy will on earth with the same perfection as the blessed did in heaven. Let us also do the same, and we shall certainly become saints.

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ON

THE PRACTICE

OF

Meditation.

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ON THE

PRACTICE OF MEDITATION.

BEFORE entering on the practice and method of meditation, it will be well to establish its necessity. There are two things upon which this necessity is grounded. The first is pointed out by St. Augustin, where he says, that he who keeps his eyes shut cannot possibly see either the way or the means of salvation. Eternal truths are spiritual, and cannot be discerned by the eyes of the body, but only by the eyes of the mind in thought and consideration. Now he who does not practice meditation, does not consider, and consequently does not see the importance of eternal salvation, nor the way he should follow to gain it. St. Bernard, writing to Pope Eugenius on this subject, says: "I fear for thee, Eugenius, lest the multitude of affairs, prayer and meditation being intermitted, should bring thee to a hard heart, which does not dread because it does not know itself." To obtain salvation we must have tender hearts; that is, docile to

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receive the impressions of the divine inspirations, and prompt to put them in execution. It was this that Solomon asked for of God: 'Give therefore to thy servant a docile heart.' 3 Kings iii. 9. It is said in St. John, that they who are of God, listen to his voice and follow it: 'And they shall all be taught of God. Every one that hath heard of the Father, and hath learned, cometh to me.' St. John vi. 45. Our hearts are of themselves hard, because they are wholly inclined to carnal pleasures, and opposed to the laws of the spirit. They are softened by the influx of grace, and this is communicated to them by means of meditation; in which the soul, by considering the divine goodness and the great love which God has for it, and the immense benefits which he has conferred upon it, becomes inflamed, is softened and made obedient to the divine calls, as David experienced, who said: 'In my meditation a fire shall flame out.' Ps. xxxviii. 4. Without it, the heart remains hard, obstinate, disobedient, and will be lost: 'A hard heart shall fear evil at the last: and he that loveth danger shall perish in it.' Eccl. iii. 27. And remaining hard, it will be so unhappy as not to know that it is so; because the heart which does not meditate, "does not dread, because it does not know itself." Because it is sensible of its defects and the impediments

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which they place in the way of salvation, hence it does not remove them, but soon loves them, and is thus lost. St. Bernard, be it observed, was writing to a Pope, who had not indeed laid aside meditation (if he even sometimes intermitted it) on account of worldly concerns, but on account of affairs which all regarded the interests of the church and the glory of God. This should be borne in mind, especially by priests, who having greater obligations, stand in greater need of divine grace, and consequently of meditation, to obtain strength to discharge them; and not only by those who lay aside meditation to devote themselves to worldly affairs, but by those who neglect it to attend to spiritual works for the good of others, as to hear confessions, preach, or write.

Applicable to this also is what St. Teresa (Letter 8.) wrote the bishop of Osma, who while he attended with great zeal to the salvation of his flock, paid little attention to meditation, from time to time relinquishing it. Hence the Saint having had a particular light, and probably even a revelation of such neglect on the part of this prelate, although he was her director, in order to promote his amendment, did not hesitate to admonish him of it, writing to him as follows: "Representing to our Lord the graces which he had conferred on Your Holiness, in making

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you humble, charitable, and zealous, I besought him to give you an increase of all virtues, when he made known to me that Your Holiness was wanting in that which is principally necessary, (and if the foundation be wanting, the work cannot stand, but must fall) namely, meditation: not persevering in it with fortitude, and thus interrupting that union, which is the unction of the Holy Spirit, from the want of which arises all that dryness and disunion which the soul experiences." And she adds: "Although it may appear to us that we are free from imperfections, yet, when God opens for us the eyes of the soul, as he is accustomed to do in meditation, we then indeed discover our imperfections." And this in fact is what the Holy Ghost declares, that for want of meditation the whole world is filled with sinners and hell with souls. 'With desolation is all the land made desolate: because there is none that considereth in the heart.' Jer. xii. 11.

The second fundamental and more weighty principle, on which is grounded the necessity of meditation, is, that those who do not meditate, do not pray, and thus lose their souls. The virtues of those who pray not cannot be firm and persevering, because perseverance is only to be obtained by prayer, and by persevering prayer. Hence, those who pray not perseveringly will not persevere. It was

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on this account that St. Paul exhorted his disciples to pray always without intermission: 'Pray without ceasing.' 1 Thess. v. 17. And for the same reason our blessed Saviour 'spoke a parable.....that we ought always to pray and not to faint.' St. Luke xviii. 1. Meditation, therefore, is morally necessary for the preservation of divine grace in the soul. I say *morally necessary;* because, although the soul, strictly speaking, may, without the aid of meditation, continue in the state of grace, yet if meditation be laid aside, it will be morally impossible, that is, very difficult, not to fall into grievous faults; and the reason is, what has just been said, that when a person does not meditate, being distracted with other affairs, he knows but little of his own wants, of his dangers, and of the means which he ought to adopt to escape them, and is but little sensible of the urgent necessity of prayer; and hence he neglects prayer, and by not praying is lost. The great bishop Palafox, in his annotations on the above-mentioned letter of St. Teresa, which he considers one of her most spiritual productions, says: "From this, we, as prelates, ought to learn that neither zeal nor charity will suffice without meditation; because virtues unassisted by meditation are deficient, and we shall be lost. The reason is evident: how can charity continue to abide in us if

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God does not give us perseverance? How will he give us perseverance, if we do not ask it of him? How shall we ask it of him without meditation? How can this miracle take place (of obtaining perseverance without meditation) if the channel be wanting through which the divine influences are conveyed to the soul, which is meditation? Without meditation there is no communication with God for the preservation of virtue: neither is there any other means, nor any other method of obtaining good things from God."

Our Lord, on the other hand, admonishes us, that he who dwells on eternal truths, on death, judgment, and a happy or miserable eternity which await us, will avoid sin: 'Remember thy last end, and thou shalt never sin.' Eccl. vii. 40. Holy David declared that the consideration of eternity induced him to exercise himself in the practice of virtue, and to correct the imperfections of his soul: 'I thought upon the days of old, and I had in my mind the eternal years, and I meditated in the night with my own heart, and I was exercised, and I swept my spirit.' lxxvi. 6, 7. And if, says a pious author, it were to be asked of the damned: Why are you now in hell? the greater part of them would answer: We are now in hell because we did not think of hell. It is impossible that he who calls to

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mind, in his spiritual exercises, the eternal truths, and attentively dwells upon them and believes them, should not be converted to God. St. Vincent of Paul said, that if, during a mission, a sinner should perform all the spiritual exercises, and should not be converted it would be a miracle, and yet he who preaches and speaks during such exercises, is only man; but in meditation it is God who speaks: 'I will lead her into solitude, and I will speak to her heart.' Osee ii. 14. Assuredly God speaks better and more powerfully than any preacher. All the saints have become saints by means of meditation. And experience shows us, that those who practise meditation very seldom fall into mortal sin; and if they unfortunately do sometimes fall into it, they soon arise, by means of meditation, and return again to God. Meditation and sin cannot exist together. A servant of God observes, that while many may say the Rosary, the office of the Blessed Virgin, exercise themselves in fasting, and still remain in sin, no one can give himself to meditation and continue an enemy of God; he must either renounce meditation or renounce sin. But if he renounce not meditation, he will renounce not only sin, but all affection to creatures, and give his whole heart to God: 'In my meditation a fire shall flame out.' Ps. xxvviii. 4. Meditation is the

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furnace in which the soul is inflamed with divine love. It is impossible to consider attentively the divine bounty, how much God deserves our love, and the love which he has shown and still shews us, and not be inflamed with his love. The same Royal Prophet says, that when he thought of God and meditated on the wonderful works of his love for man, his heart was inflamed with the most ardent desire to please him, and his soul rendered incapable of supporting the superabundant consolations with which our Lord communicated himself to him: 'I remembered God, and was delighted, and was exercised, and my spirit swooned away.' Ps. lxxvi. 4. We come now to the practice.

The best place for meditation is the church or chapel; but where a person cannot avail himself of these, he may make his meditation at home or in the fields; he may even make it on the road, or at work, by fixing his mind on God. How many poor peasants, having no other opportunities, meditate well while they are at work, or journeying from place to place! He who seeks God finds him in all places and at all times.

The best time for meditation is the morning. The duties of the day will go on very indifferently if a person neglects to make his meditation in the morning. Meditation ought properly to be made twice in

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the day, morning and evening; but when it can only be made once, it should be in the morning. The Ven. Caraffa says, that a fervent act of love, made during the morning meditation, is sufficient to keep the soul in a state of holy fervor during the whole day. As to the length of time which should be spent in meditation, a confessor or director will best regulate that by his experience and prudence. This, however, is certain, that half an hour is not sufficient for those who would attain a high degree of perfection. For those who are only beginning, half an hour may suffice; but, above all, they should not discontinue their meditations, when visited with spiritual dryness.

We come now to the different parts of meditation, of which there are three; the preparation, the meditation itself, and the conclusion. The preparation consists of three acts; of faith in the presence of God, of humility, and of prayer for light and assistance. Say for the first: I believe that thou art present, O God, and I adore thee from the depth of my own nothingness. For the second: I have deserved hell, O Lord, on account of my sins; I am sorry for having offended thee; pardon me, I beseech, in thy great mercy. For the third: O Eternal Father, for the love of Jesus Christ and of Mary his Mother, enlighten me in this my

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meditation, and enable me to profit by it. Then say a "Hail Mary," to the ever Blessed Virgin to obtain this light, and a "Glory be to the Father," to St. Joseph, to your angel guardian, and to your patron Saint. These acts should be made attentively but briefly, and then pass on to the meditation.

For this, those who can read may make use of a book, and pause as soon as any thing particularly strikes the mind. St. Francis of Sales says, that in this we should imitate bees, which stay on a flower so long as it affords them honey and then pass on to another. Those who do not know how to read, may meditate on the four last things, the benefits and favours of God, and above all, on the life and passion of Jesus Christ; which last, St. Francis of Sales says, ought to be the ordinary subject of our meditations. Oh what a delightful book, for devout souls, is the passion of Jesus! In it we may read, better than in any other book, the malice of sin and the love of God for man. The Ven. Brother Bernard, of Corlione, having asked our Blessed Saviour if it were pleasing to him that he should learn to read, the crucifix before which he was kneeling, answered: "To read what? what books? I am thy book: this is all that is necessary for thee."

The advantages of meditation consist not

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only, nor indeed so much, in dwelling seriously on divine truths, as in exciting the affections, in praying and resolving: these are the three fruits of meditation. When, then, a person has meditated on some eternal maxim, and when God has spoken to his heart, he must then with his heart speak to God in affections, acts of faith, gratitude, adoration, humility, and above all, love and contrition, which last is also an act of love. Love is the golden bond which binds the soul to God. 'Charity is the bond of perfection.' Coloss. iii. 14. Every act of love is a treasure in which we are made partakers of the divine friendship: 'An infinite treasure to men! which they that use, become the friends of God.' Wisd. vii. 14. 'I love them that love me.' Prov. viii. 17. 'He that loveth me, shall be loved of my Father.' St. John xiv. 21. 'Charity covereth a multitude of sins.' 1 St. Peter iv. 8. The Ven. Sister Mary of the Cross saw a great fire, in which chaff was consumed as soon as it was thrown into it; by which she was given to understand, that, in like manner, all the faults of the soul are done away with and destroyed by an act of divine love. Moreover, St. Thomas teaches, that every act of love acquires for us a degree of eternal glory. Now an act of love is: "My God, I love thee above all things, or I love thee with my

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whole heart. I desire that all should love thee." An act of resignation in all things to the divine will is: "Make known to me, O Lord, what is pleasing to thee, and I will willingly accomplish it." An act of oblation of ourselves to God is: "Behold me, and do with me and all things that belong to me what thou wilt." These oblations of ourselves are so particularly pleasing to God, that St. Teresa offered herself to him fifty times in the day. The most perfect act of love is to delight in the infinite happiness of God. When the soul feels herself united to God by supernatural or infused recollection, she ought not to endeavour to exercise herself in any other acts but those to which she finds herself sweetly inclined by Almighty God, but should lovingly attend to what God works within her, that she may not oppose any obstacle to the divine operations. If, as St. Francis of Sales advises, in the beginning of her meditation she finds herself inspired by the Holy Spirit, with some pious affection, she ought to discontinue reflection, and give herself up to the course of her affections, since the object of meditation is to excite to affections, and hence, the end being obtained, the means should be discontinued.

In the second place, another very great advantage of meditation is its inducing us to

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pray to God with humility and confidence to enlighten us, to pardon us our sins, to grant us perseverance, a happy death, heaven, and above all, the gift of his holy love. St. Francis of Sales exhorts us to seek for divine love before all other graces, because, as he observes, by obtaining love we obtain all. If, however, the soul, on account of spiritual dryness and desolation, cannot exercise herself in this manner, let her repeat that prayer of David: *Incline unto my aid, O God. O Lord, make haste to help me.* The Ven. Father Paul Segneri said, that he had learned from experience that there is no exercise more advantageous in meditation than to pray again and again. We must pray in the name, or through the merits of Jesus Christ, who has promised us, as it has been said above: *Amen, amen, I say to you, if you ask the Father any thing in my name, he will give it to you.*

The third advantage to be derived from meditation is the forming (at least at the end of it) of some good resolution, not only in general, as to avoid all deliberate faults, even the slightest, and to give ourselves wholly to God, but also in particular, as to avoid with greater care some defect to which we may have been more subject, or to practise more diligently some virtue in which we may be called upon to exercise ourselves

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more frequently, or to bear with the annoyance of some disagreeable person, to obey more exactly a superior or a rule, to be more attentive in mortifying ourselves in some particular circumstances, and the like. We ought never to rise from meditation without making some particular resolution.

The last part of meditation is the conclusion, which should consist of three acts. First—We should thank God for the lights with which he has favoured us. Secondly—We should resolve to keep our good resolutions. Thirdly—We should beseech the Eternal Father, for the love of Jesus and of Mary, to enable us to be faithful to them; and finish all by recommending to him the souls in purgatory, the prelates of the church, sinners, and all our relations, friends and benefactors, with an "Our Father" and a "Hail Mary," which are the most useful prayers taught us by Jesus Christ and his holy church.

When we have finished our meditation, we should, first, as St. Francis of Sales recommends, make a spiritual nosegay of flowers to smell at the rest of the day; that is, we should select one or two points, on which we may have been more particularly affected, and recal them occasionally to our minds to invigorate us in the discharge of all our duties. Secondly—We should endeavour to

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put our good resolutions in practice as soon as possible, as well on the trifling as on the great occasions which may present themselves; for example, to overcome with meekness any one who may be angry with us; or to mortify ourselves in our seeing, hearing, or speaking. And we should be particular in preserving, by means of silence, as far as is possible, the sentiment of those affections which we have experienced; otherwise, if we immediately distract ourselves by useless words or actions, the fervour of devotion which we acquired in our meditation will soon be cooled and extinguished.

Lastly, and above all, we should be constant in meditation, and neither discontinue nor diminish it in time of spiritual dryness, although we should be in ever so great desolation, and that for a long time. How many courtiers, says St. Francis of Sales, come to pay homage to their prince, and are satisfied with being only seen by him! Let us go to meditation to wait on our God and to please him; and if he be pleased to speak to us, and to favour us with his consolations, let us thank him for his great goodness; if not, let us be content to remain peaceably in his divine presence, adoring him and exposing to him our wants; and if the Lord should not then speak to us, he will certainly regard our attention and fidelity, and, according to our confidence, will hear our supplications.

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A SHORT TREATISE

ON THE

Necessity, Efficacy and Conditions

OF

PRAYER.

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A SHORT TREATISE ON THE

NECESSITY, EFFICACY AND CONDITIONS

OF

PRAYER.

SECTION I.

ON THE NECESSITY OF PRAYER.

It was blasphemously assereted by Luther and Calvin, that, after Adam's sin the observance of the divine law became impossible; and it was maintained by Jansenius, but condemned by the Church as an error, that some precepts were impossible even for the just, according to their present powers, and also that the divine assistance was wanting to them for their fulfilment. Now the Council of Trent declares that God does not command impossibilities, but admonishes us to do what we are able, with the assistance of his more abundant grace, which is required for the fulfilment of that which we are unable of ourselves to do, and then gives us assistance to enable us to do it. *God does not command impossibilities*, are the words of

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the Council, *but by commanding admonishes you to do what you are able.....and assists you, that you may be able to do it.* Hence many eminent theologians teach, that God gives, or at least offers to all, either the proximate grace to enable them to observe the commandments, or certainly the remote grace of prayer, by which to obtain the proximate grace.

Still, however, there can be no doubt but that the observance of the law in the present state of corrupt nature is very difficult, and even morally impossible, without a special and greater assistance from God than what was necessary in the state of innocence. Now this special assistance, God does not, ordinarily speaking, grant, except to those who pray for it. St. Augustin teaches, that except the first exciting graces, which are given to us independently of ourselves, as our calling to faith or to repentance, all others, and especially the grace of perseverance, will not be bestowed upon us unless we pray for them: "We believe that no one comes to salvation but by the invitation of God; that no one invited works out his salvation but by the assistance of God; and that no one but he who prays deserves this assistance." (*Lib. de Eccl. dogmat. c.* 56.) And, in another place, he says decidedly: "that God gives us some graces even though

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we do not pray, as the beginning of faith; but has provided others for us only if we do pray." (*Lib. de Persev. cap.* 5.)

Hence theologians conclude that prayer is necessary for adults, because, in the ordinary dispensations of Providence, no one, without recommending himself to God and imploring the graces necessary for salvation, can be saved. St. John Chrysostom says, that as the soul is necessary for the life of the body, so prayer is necessary for the preservation of divine grace in the soul. This is what Jesus Christ teaches us, when he says: 'We ought always to pray.' St. Luke xviii. 1. This is the meaning of those words of St. James: 'You have not, because you ask not.' iv. 2; and this also may be gathered from that short sentence of our blessed Saviour: 'Ask and you shall receive.' St. Luke xi. "If, then," says St. Teresa, "he who asks receives; he who does not ask does not receive." 'God will have all men to be saved.' 1 Tim. ii. 4; but will, at the same time, have them pray for the graces necessary for salvation. And shall we not do this? I close this first point by concluding from what has been said, that he who prays will certainly be saved; while he who does not pray will be lost. All the saints became saints and were saved by means of prayer. All the reprobate have been lost for want of prayer;

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had they prayed, they would not have been condemned. The thought that they once might so easily have secured their salvation by beseeching God for his assistance, and that now the time of supplication is gone for ever, shall be to them the source of the greatest despair.

SECTION II.

ON THE EFFICACY OF PRAYER.

THE sacred Scriptures abound with texts, in which our Lord teaches us that he hears all our prayers. 'He shall cry to me, and I will hear him.' Ps. xc. 15. 'Thou shalt pray to him and he will hear thee.' Job xxii. 27. 'Cry to me and I will hear thee.' Jer. xxxiii. 3. 'Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee.' Ps. xlix. 15. 'Who hath called upon him, and he despised him?' Eccl. ii. 12. 'At the voice of thy cry, as soon as he shall hear, he will answer thee.' Isa. xxx. 19. 'As they are yet speaking, I will hear.' Isa. lxv. 24. 'Blessed be God, who hath not turned away my prayer, nor his mercy from me.' Ps. lxv. 20. The mercy of God ever attends our prayers; hence, St. Augustin, on this last passage, says: "seeing that your prayer is not turned away, be assured that his mercy is not turned away from you."

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Jesus Christ says: 'You shall ask whatsoever you will, and it shall be done unto you.' St. John xv. 17.

Hence, says Theodoret, prayer is omnipotent; though but one, it can obtain all things. St. Bonaventure teaches, that "by prayer is obtained the possession of all good and deliverance from all evil." And whenever, adds St. Bernard, our Lord does not grant us the grace which we pray for, we may confidently hope that he will bestow upon us some other grace which will be more beneficial to us. 'Thou, O Lord,' says holy David, 'art sweet and mild: and plenteous in mercy to all that call upon thee.' lxxxv. 5. And St. James says: 'If any of you want wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men abundantly, and upbraideth not.' i. 5. This Apostle says, that to those who pray, our Lord does not give with a sparing hand, as men of this earth give, because men's riches are finite; but God, because his riches are infinite, and by how much the more he gives, the more he has to bestow, *giveth abundantly:* giveth with a bountiful hand, more abundantly than we know how to ask of him: *and upbraideth not;* does not reproach us with our offences against him, when we go to him to crave his graces.

This arises from the bounty of God's nature being diffusive, whence God, who by

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nature is infinite bounty, as St. Leo says, has a sovereign desire to communicate his goods and felicity to us. And this makes him solicitous for our welfare: 'The Lord,' says holy David, 'is careful for me.' Ps. xxxix. 18. And this made the same holy king say: 'In what day soever I shall call upon thee, behold I know thou art my God.' lv. 10. As though he had said, Lord, whenever I invoke thee, I know immediately that thou art my God; that is, infinite bounty, who desirest that we should pray to thee, that thou mayest bestow thy benefits upon us, because no sooner do we implore thy graces than thou grantest them to us. When the poor leper presented himself to our blessed Saviour, and said to him: 'Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.' St. Matt. viii. 2. Jesus answered him: *I will; be thou made clean;* as though he had said: ah, my son, dost thou doubt of my will to heal thee? dost thou not know that I am thy God? that I desire to see all happy? and have for no other reason descended from heaven but to make all happy? I will; be thou healed.

Many complain that God does not bestow upon them the graces which they wish for; but God, says St. Bernard, has much more reason to complain that they do not pray to him for them, and thus close his hands, which he would otherwise open to bestow

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benefits upon them as he desires to do: "Many complain that grace is wanting to them, but grace more justly complains that many are wanting to it." No, do not complain of me, says our Lord, if you have not received from me the graces which are necessary for you: complain of yourselves for not having besought me for them, and on this account, not having obtained them; henceforward pray to me for them and you shall be fully satisfied: 'Hitherto you have not asked any thing in my name. Ask and you shall receive: that your joy may be full.' St. John xvi. 24.

The ancient monks, having consulted together as to what would be the most useful practice for the securing of eternal salvation, agreed that it would be to repeat that petition: *Incline unto my aid, O God; O Lord, make haste to help me;* and Father Paul Segneri, speaking of himself, says: that at first in his meditations, he employed himself in affections, but afterwards, conscious of the great use and necessity of prayer, he was careful to devote himself for the greater part to its exercise. But how comes it that some persons pray and do not obtain? They pray, but they do not pray as they ought; and on this account they do not obtain: 'You ask, and receive not, because you ask amiss.' St. James iv. 3. Many seek for grace, but

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without the proper conditions. Let us see therefore what are the necessary conditions of prayer, in order to obtain grace.

SECTION III.

ON THE CONDITIONS OF PRAYER.

THE first condition of prayer is, humility: 'God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.' St. James iv. 6. St. James, then, admonishes us, that God does not hear but rejects the petitions of the proud; while he is ever ready to listen to the prayers of the humble: 'The prayer of him that humbleth himself shall pierce the clouds, and will not depart till the Most High behold.' Eccl. xxxv. 21. The prayer of the humble soul directly enters heaven, and, presenting itself before the divine throne, retires not until God regards and hears it. And if the soul that prays should be ever so sinful, God will not despise it, if it be but humble and sorry for its sins: 'A contrite and humble heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.' Ps. l. 19.

The second condition of prayer is confidence: 'No one hath hoped in the Lord, and hath been confounded.' Eccl. ii. 11. The Holy Spirit assures us, that no one has ever placed his confidence in God, and has been

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disappointed. Our Lord revealed to St. Gertrude, that when any one prays to him with confidence, he, as it were, offers such violence to him, that he cannot refuse to hear him in all that he asks for: "Prayer," says St. John Climachus, "offers a holy violence to God;" but says Turtullian, "a violence which is pleasing to him." Why did Jesus Christ in the prayer which he taught us, to obtain all graces necessary for salvation, instruct us to call God, not our Lord, nor our Judge, but *Our Father?* Because he would have us ask favours of God with the same confidence as a poor or infirm son asks for food or remedies from his father. If a son is dying of hunger, it is sufficient for him to make this known to his father, to gain instant relief; and if he has received a bite from some venomous serpent, it is sufficient for him to show his wound to his father, to obtain an immediate and suitable remedy. Hence our blessed Redeemer tells us: 'All things whatsoever you ask when you pray, believe that you shall receive; and they shall come unto you.' St. Mark xi. 24. It is sufficient therefore to pray with confidence, to obtain whatever we wish for of God. And why should our Lord so frequently exhort us to call upon him for his assistance and graces, if he does not intend to grant them? "He would not exhort us to ask," says St.

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Augustin, "if he did not intend to give." (*De Verb. Dom. Serm.* 5.) The Cananean woman, having a daughter who was possessed by the devil, went to entreat Jesus Christ to deliver her, saying: 'Have mercy on me.....my daughter is grievously troubled by a devil.' St. Matt. xv. 22. Our Lord answered her: *I was not sent but to the sheep that are lost of the house of Israel:* I was not sent for you Gentiles but for the benefit of the Jews. She, however, did not lose courage, but with confidence repeated her request: *Lord*, said she, *help me. Who answering said: it is not good to take the bread of the children, and to cast it to dogs. But she said: Yea, Lord; for the whelps also eat of the crumbs that fall from the table of their masters. Then Jesus, seeing her great confidence, answering, said to her: O woman, great is thy faith: be it done to thee as thou wilt: and her daughter was cured from that hour.*

Confidence then is capable of obtaining all that we seek for from God. But on what, some one will ask, ought we to ground this confidence? On what? On the bounty of God, and on the promise which he himself has made to us, saying: *Ask and you shall receive,* "When truth promises," says St. Augustin, "who can be afraid of being deceived?"

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The third condition of prayer is perseverance, without which salvation cannot be obtained. The grace of salvation is not one grace, but a succession of graces, which are all united by the grace of final perseverance. Now with this succession of graces, a succession of our prayers ought to correspond. St. Augustin, on the parable in St. Luke, of the man who, to get rid of the importunity of his friend, rises from his bed and gives him all the bread that he asks for, says: "now if such a friend, merely to get rid of another's importunity, gave him, against his will, the bread which he craved, how much more will our good God give us, who exhorts us to ask favours of him?" God desires to grant us salvation and all the graces necessary for salvation, but he will have us persevere in praying for them: "He desires," says Cornelius a Lapide, "that we should be persevering in prayer even to importunity." Man cannot resist importunity; but God does not only not resist our importunity, but desires that we should be importunate in beseeching him for his graces, and particularly for that of holy perseverance.

It is true that we cannot of ourselves merit the grace of final perseverance, as the council of Trent has declared, (*sess.* 6. *cap.* 23.) it being a gratuitous gift of God: however, as St. Augustin says, we may, in some mea-

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sure, merit it by prayer and supplication: "This gift of God can be suppliantly merited; that is it can be obtained by supplication." (*Lib. de Dono Persev. cap.* 6.) So that whoever prays for perseverance, although he cannot merit it, yet, says Suarez, will infallibly obtain it. But it is not sufficient, says Bellarmine, to ask only once for the grace of perseverance: "It must be daily asked for, that it may be daily obtained." And hence Jesus Christ says: 'We ought always to pray and not to faint.' St. Luke xviii. 1. We ought never to cease from prayer, otherwise, while we pray not, temptation may overcome us: 'Watch ye, therefore, praying at all times, that you may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that are to come, and to stand before the Son of Man.' St. Luke xxi. 36. Watch continually in prayer, says Jesus Christ, that you may not be separated from me when I shall judge you. It was for this reason that St. Paul admonished his disciples to pray always: 'Pray without ceasing.' 1 Thess. v. 17.

'Blessed is the man that heareth me, and that watcheth daily at my gates.' Prov. viii. 34. Blessed is he, says the Almighty, who hears me, and watches continually at the gates of my mercy. And hence, in the Gospel, Jesus Christ exhorts us, and even en-

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joins us to pray, (since prayer is not merely of counsel but of precept) in these words: 'Ask and you shall receive: seek and you shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you.' St. Luke xi. 9. It would seem that it would have been sufficient to have said *ask*; why therefore were *seek* and *knock* added? their addition was not superfluous: by them our blessed Redeemer wished to teach us that we are to imitate poor beggars, who, when they do not obtain an alms and are dismissed, cease not to entreat again and again, and even knock at the door, if they do not see the master of the house, till they become very troublesome and importunate. This is what our Lord desires that we should do; that we should pray, and continue to pray, and never cease to pray to him to assist us, to stretch forth his hands over us, and never suffer us to be separated from him by sin. We should do this not only when we rise in the morning, but frequently in the day, when we hear Mass, when we make our meditation, when we return thanks after communion, when we visit the blessed Sacrament, when we examine our consciences at night, and particularly when we are assaulted by any temptation, especially if it be a temptation of impurity; whoever does not then have recourse

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to God, by invoking at least the names of Jesus and Mary, will easily fall.

But some one will say: I am a sinner, and God does not hear sinners, as we read in St. John: 'We know that God doth not hear sinners.' ix. 31. To this I answer, that these words were not spoken by Jesus Christ, but by the man who had been born blind. St. Thomas says, that such a proposition is false in itself, and can be true only in one case, if sinners should address themselves to God to obtain the means of committing sin; as, for example, if any one should beg of God to help him to take revenge of an enemy. Certainly God would not hear such a prayer. But if any one should pray and ask for such things as would promote his eternal salvation, of what consequence would it be if he were a sinner? Although he should have been the wickedest wretch on earth, he would assuredly obtain all that he asked for. The promise is general, and embraces all: 'Every one that asketh, receiveth.' St. Luke xi. 10. It is not necessary, says St. Thomas, that we should have merited the graces for which we pray, for by prayer we may obtain even those which we do not merit. (1, 2, *quæst.* 114. *art.* 9. *ad.* 2.) We have only to pray, to obtain. The reason is, as the same holy Doctor says, (2, 2, *qu.* 83, *art.* 16, *ad.* 1.) because, "merit depends

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on justice, but impetration depends on grace." The power of obtaining, which prayer has, is derived not from the merit of him who prays, but from the mercy and fidelity of God, who, gratuitously and of his own pure bounty, has promised to hear those who pray to him. When then we pray, it is not necessary that we should be friends of God in order to obtain his graces: "Prayer itself," adds the Angelic Doctor, "makes us the friends of God." And St. John Chrysostom, in like manner, says: "What is not obtained by friendship, is obtained by prayer." And Jesus Christ, the more to encourage us to pray, and to assure us of obtaining grace, makes us that great and special promise: "Amen, amen, I say to you: If you ask the Father any thing in my name, he will give it you." St. John xvi. 23. As though he had said: Sinners be not disheartened, you have not indeed deserved to be heard by my Father; but when you desire to obtain grace, ask for it in my name; that is, through my merits, and I promise you, and be assured (*Amen, amen, I say to you*, being a kind of oath) that whatever you shall ask, you shall obtain from my Father: *Whatsoever you shall ask, he will give it you.* Oh! what a great consolation for a poor sinner to know that his sins cannot hinder him from obtaining whatever graces he asks for; since Jesus

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Christ has promised, that whatever we shall ask through his merits, shall be given to us by Almighty God.

It must be understood, however, that the divine promise of hearing our prayers refers not to those which we offer up to obtain temporal favours, but to those only which we offer up to obtain such spiritual graces as are either necessary or useful for salvation; and that we shall certainly obtain such graces when we ask for them in the name and through the merits of Jesus Christ, as we have said above; because, as St. Augustin says: "Whatever is asked contrary to the affair of salvation, is not asked in the name of our blessed Redeemer." Whatever is pernicious to our spiritual welfare, cannot be asked in the name of Jesus Christ; and hence God neither does nor can grant it. And why? Because God loves us. The physician who has any regard for his patient assuredly never allows him to take such food as he knows will injure him. How many, if they were sick or poor, would not commit the sins which they now commit? Many pray to God for health, or for riches, but God seeing that these would be to them occasions of sin or of growing lukewarm, does not grant them. Hence when we pray for temporal blessings, it should always be on condition of their being advantageous to the

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soul. And when we see that God does not grant them to us, we should be assured that he denies them to us, because he loves us, and because he sees that what we seek for would be obstacles to our spiritual welfare.

Again, if we frequently call upon God to deliver us from some troublesome temptation, which puts us in danger of losing his grace, and he does not grant our prayer, but permits the temptation to continue, it is that our souls may cling more closely to his love. It is not temptations and evil thoughts that can separate us from God, or do us any injury, but only our own wicked consent to them. When, by the grace of God, we resist temptation, we advance much in the way to perfection. St. Paul relates of himself, that being much troubled with impure temptations, he thrice prayed to our Lord to deliver him from them: 'There was given me a sting of my flesh, an angel of Satan to buffet me. For which thing thrice I besought the Lord, that it might depart from me.' And what did our Lord answer? He said: 'My grace is sufficient for thee.' 2 Cor. xii. 7. If therefore, when we are assaulted by temptations, we pray to God, either to deliver us from them, or to enable us to resist them, we may feel assured that he will help us: 'Thou calledst upon me in affliction, and I delivered thee: I heard thee in the secret

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place of tempest.' Ps. lxxx. 8. Our Lord frequently leaves us to contend with the storm, for our greater good; but, in the meantime, he hears us in secret, gives us his grace, and enables us to resist and to resign ourselves to him.

So that, I repeat, all the graces which are not necessary for salvation, we should pray for conditionally, and if God does not grant them, we should feel assured that he refuses them only for our greater good. But we ought at the same time to feel assured that God will grant us spiritual graces whenever we pray to him for them. St. Teresa says, that God loves us more than we love ourselves; and St. Augustin, that God has a greater desire to bestow his graces upon us, than we have to receive them. Hence St. Mary Magdalen of Pazzi said, that God, as it were, is obliged to the soul that prays to him, and may be supposed to address her saying: I thank thee for asking me to bestow my graces upon thee. Yes, for then it is as though the soul opened to him the way of doing good, and of satisfying the desire which he has to bestow graces upon all. And how can it ever happen that God will not hear the soul that asks him for things which are all pleasing to him. When the soul says, Lord, I ask not for riches, nor honours, nor earthly goods, but only for thy

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grace: deliver me from sin, grant me a happy death, grant me heaven, and in the meantime grant me thy love, (a grace which, as St. Francis of Sales says, we ought to ask for before every other) grant me resignation to thy holy will, (in which true love essentially consists) how is it possible that God will not hear her? And what prayers, O God, says St. Augustin, dost thou hear, if thou hearest not these, which are all according to thy desire? "What prayers dost thou hear, if thou hearest not these?" And St. Bernard says, that when we seek for such spiritual graces, the desire to obtain them comes to us certainly from God himself; hence the Saint, turning himself to God, adds: "Why shouldst thou give the desire, if it was not thy will to hear?" By which the Saint would say: Since, O Lord, thou excitest me to pray to thee for these graces, I ought to feel assured that thou wilt grant them to me. But what above all ought to give us the greatest confidence, when we pray for spiritual graces, is what Jesus Christ says in St. Luke: 'If you then being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father from Heaven give the good Spirit to them that ask him?' xi. 13. If, says our blessed Saviour, you who are wicked and full of self-love, know not how to deny your

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children the good things which they ask of you; how much more will your heavenly Father, who loves you much more than any earthly parent, grant you spiritual blessings when you pray to him for them?

Let us therefore pray; and let us, if we would be saved, ever seek for grace. Let prayer be most dear to us, and the exercise of our whole lives. And when we ask for particular graces from God, let us never forget to ask for that of being ever constant in prayer; because if we cease to pray, we shall be lost. What is more easy than to pray? to say to God, help me, O Lord, assist me and grant me grace to love thee, &c. what can be easier than this? But if we do not do this, we cannot be saved. Let us, therefore, pray, and this, not only to God, but to the ever blessed Virgin, to obtain her intercession: "Let us seek for grace, (says St. Bernard,) and let us seek for it through Mary." And when we recommend ourselves to her, let us be confident that she will hear us, and will obtain for us what we desire. She can want neither the power, nor the will to assist us, says the same saint. And, St. Augustin says: "Remember, O most holy Virgin, that no one has ever been known to fly to thy patronage and be deserted." Ah no, says St. Bonaventure, he who invokes Mary, finds salvation, and

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hence he calls her: "O salvation of them that invoke thee." Let us, therefore, pray, invoking Jesus and Mary, and let us never cease to pray. With this I conclude; but in so doing, I cannot but lament, that while the sacred Scriptures and the writings of the Fathers, so repeatedly inculcate the exercise of prayer, other pious books, preachers and confessors should speak but little of it. Seeing the necessity of prayer, I say, that all spiritual books, preachers and confessors, ought to inculcate nothing so strongly as constant prayer. Let them repeat: pray, pray, pray, and never cease to pray. If you pray, you will certainly be saved: if you do not pray, you will assuredly be lost.

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METHOD

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METHOD OF

CONVERSING CONTINUALLY AND FAMILIARLY WITH GOD.

Taken from the French, with additions by Blessed A. M. De Liguori.

When holy Job considered that God was so intent on promoting man's welfare that he desired nothing so much as to love man and to be loved by man, he wondered; and addressing himself to him, exclaimed: 'What is man that thou shouldst magnify him? or why dost thou set thy heart upon him?' Job vii. 17. From this it appears that it is wrong to suppose that to treat with God familiarly and with great confidence is to be wanting of that respect which is due to his divine majesty. You ought indeed, devout soul, to reverence him with all humility, and to abase yourself before him, particularly at the remembrance of your ingratitude and the outrages which you have committed against him; but this ought not to hinder you from treating with him with the great-

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est possible love and confidence. He is infinite majesty, but, at the same time, he is infinite bounty and infinite love. You have in God the highest Lord, but you have in him also the greatest lover. He does not look down upon you with disdain, but is pleased when you treat with him with the same confidence, freedom and love as children treat with their mothers. Hear how he invites us to present ourselves at his feet, and the caresses which he promises us: 'You shall be carried at the breasts, and upon the knees they shall caress you. As one whom the mother caresseth, so will I comfort you.' Isa. lxvi. 12, 13. As a mother delights in taking her child upon her knees, in caressing and feeding him, so does our good God delight in treating with equal love and tenderness those souls who give themselves entirely to him, and place all their hopes in his goodness and bounty.

1. Reflect that you have neither friend, nor brother, nor father, nor mother, nor spouse, nor lover, who loves you more than God. Divine grace is the rich treasure, by means of which we poor servants and most vile creatures become the dear friends of our Creator himself: 'An infinite treasure to men! which they that use become the friends of God.' Wisd. vii. 14. For this end he sought to raise our confidence in him; *he*,

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as the Apostle expresses it, *emptied himself*, humbling himself so as to become man, in order to converse familiarly with us: 'Afterwards he was seen upon earth, and conversed with men.' Bar. iii. 38. He came to become an infant, to become poor, and even to be publicly executed on a cross; he came also to assume the appearances of bread and wine, in order to be our constant companion, and to be intimately united with us: 'He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, abideth in me and I in him.' St. John vi. In a word, he loves you as though he had no love but for you alone. And on this account you ought not to love any other but God. Hence you may and ought to say to him: 'My beloved to me, and I to him.' Cant. ii. 16; my God has given himself entirely to me, and I give myself entirely to him; he has chosen me for his beloved, and I choose him for my only love: 'My beloved is white and ruddy, chosen out of thousands.' Cant. v. 10.

2. Say to him therefore frequently: O God, why dost thou love me so much? What good canst thou see in me? Hast thou forgotten the injuries which I have committed against thee? But since thou hast dealt with me with such great love, as, instead of consigning me to hell, to bestow upon me so many graces, whom shall I

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henceforward love but thee, who art my only good, my all? My most amiable God, if hitherto I have offended thee, what most afflicts me now is not so much the punishment which I have deserved, as the displeasure which I have occasioned thee, who art worthy of infinite love! But thou knowest not how to despise a heart that repents and humbles itself: 'A contrite and humble heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.' Ps. l. 19. How do I now desire in this life and for the next, no other but thee! 'For, what have I in heaven? and besides thee what do I desire upon the earth?.....Thou art the God of my heart, and the God that is my portion for ever.' Ps. lxxii. 25, 26. Thou alone art and shalt be for ever the only Lord of my heart, and of my will; thou alone my good, my happiness, my hope, my love, my all: *The God of my heart, and the God that is my portion forever.*

3. And the more to increase your confidence in God, often call to mind his loving conduct towards you, and the merciful means which he has made use of to withdraw you from a disorderly life, from all earthly attachments, and to bring you to his holy love. On these accounts, if you have a determined will to love him and to please him as far as you are able, cease to fear him so as to treat with him but with little confidence. The

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mercies which he has shown you are the strongest pledges of his love for you. Diffidence in those who love him, and whom he loves, is displeasing to him. So that, if you would be pleasing to his loving heart, treat him henceforward with the greatest possible confidence and love.

'I have graven thee in my hands; thy walls are always before my eyes.' Isa. xlix. 16. My beloved soul, saith our Lord, of whom art thou afraid and diffident? I hold thee written in my hands, that I may never forget to bestow my benefits upon thee. Art thou afraid of thy enemies? Know that the care of thy defence is always before me, so that I cannot lose sight of it. For this reason did holy David rejoice, saying: 'O Lord, thou hast crowned us, as with a shield of thy good will.' Ps. v. 13. Who, O God, will be able to hurt us, if thou defendest us with thy bounty and love, and with them surroundest us on all sides? Above all, animate yourself to confidence, by considering the gift which God has given us of Jesus Christ. 'God so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son.' St. John iii. 16. How, exclaims the Apostle, can we ever fear that God will refuse us any good gift, after he has been pleased to bestow upon us even his own Son? 'He delivered him up for us all:

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how hath he not also, with him, given us all things?' Rom. viii. 32.

4. 'My delight is to be with the children of men.' Prov. viii. 31. The paradise of God, if so it may be said, is the heart of man. Does God love you? Love him. His delight is to be with you, and it should be yours to be with him and to spend the whole time of your life with him, with whom you hope to spend a blessed eternity.

5. Accustom yourself to speak to him as though you were alone with him, familiarly, with confidence and with love, as to your dearest friend, who of all others, loves you the most. And if it is a great error, as has been said, to treat with God with diffidence, and to wish always to appear in his presence, as a timid and bashful slave, trembling with alarm before his prince; it would be a still greater error to think that to converse with God is tedious and bitter. No, it is not so: 'His conversation hath no bitterness, nor his company any tediousness.' Wisd. viii. 16. Ask those who really love him, and they will tell you, that in all the pains and trials of life, they can no where find such true and solid consolation as in conversing lovingly with God.

6. However, a continual application of the mind is not required of you, so as to neglect your employments and recreations. Nothing

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more is required, than without relinquishing your occupations, to do towards God what you do on occasions towards those who love you and whom you love.

7. Your God is always nigh to you, even within you: 'In him we live, move, and be.' Acts xvii. 28. There is no screen through which he desires to be spoken to; on the contrary, he delights in your treating confidently with him. Treat with him of your affairs, of your designs, of your trials, of your fears, and of whatever concerns you. Do it above all, as I have said, with confidence, with an open heart, because God does not usually speak to the soul that does not speak to him: since not being accustomed to treat with him, she would hardly understand his voice were he to speak to her. And of this our Lord complains: 'Our sister is little what shall we do to our sister in the day when she is to be spoken to?' Cant. viii. 8. Our sister is a child in my love: what shall we do by speaking, if she does not understand me? God would have us regard him as our almighty and most terrible Lord, when we despise his grace, but on the contrary, as our most loving friend, when we love him: and hence he desires that we should then speak to him frequently, in a familiar manner and without restraint.

8. It is true that God ought always to be

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treated with the most sovereign respect, but when he so favours you as to make you sensible of his presence, and of his desire that you should speak to him, as to the one who above all others loves you, express to him your sentiments freely and with confidence. 'She preventeth them that covet her, so that she first showeth herself unto them.' Wisd. vi. 14. He, without waiting for you to go to him, when you desire his love, prevents you, and presents himself to you, bringing with him the graces and remedies which are necessary for you. He waits only for you to speak to him, to show you that he is nigh to you, and ready to be united with you, and to console you. 'The eyes of the Lord are upon the just: and his ears unto their prayers.' Ps. xxxiii. 16.

9. Our God by his immensity is in all places; but there are two principally, in which he more specially resides: one is the highest heaven, where he is present by his glory, which he communicates to the blessed; the other is upon the earth, and is within the humble soul that loves him: 'He dwelleth in the high and holy place, and with a contrite and humble spirit.' Isaiah lvii. 15. Our God then dwelleth in the highest heavens, but disdains not to spend days and nights with his faithful servants in their cells and caves, where he imparts to them his divine conso-

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lations, of which one alone far surpasses all worldly delights, and which he only does not desire who has not experienced them. 'O taste and see that the Lord is sweet.' Ps. xxxiii. 9.

10. Other friends in this world can converse together only at times, and at others must be separated: but between God and you, if you will, there need never be any separation. 'Thou shalt rest and thy sleep shall be sweet.....for the Lord is at thy side.' Prov. iii. 24, 26. You may sleep and God will place himself at your side, and will watch continually by you. 'I shall repose myself with her.....knowing that she will communicate to me of her good things.' Wisd. viii. 16, 19. When you repose, he departs not from your pillow, but is there ever thinking of you; in order that when you awake in the night, he may speak to you by his holy inspirations, and receive from you some act of love, of oblation, or of gratitude, thus to keep up with you, even in the hours of rest, his lovely and sweet conversation. And sometimes, even while you sleep, he will speak to you and will make his voice audible, in order that when you awake you may obey it: 'I will speak to him in a dream.' Numb. xii. 6.

11. He is with you in the morning to hear from you some word of love or confidence,

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to be the depository of your first thoughts, and of all the actions which you purpose to perform during the day in order to please him, as also of all the trials which you offer willingly to undergo for his love and glory. But as he fails not to present himself to you the moment you awake, do not you fail on your part immediately to turn yourself lovingly to him and to rejoice at hearing from him that he is not at a distance from you, as when you were in sin, but that he loves you and desires to be loved by you, intimating to you at the same moment the lovely precept: 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart.' Deut. vi. 5.

12. Never therefore be forgetful of his sweet presence, as are the greater part of men. Speak to him as frequently as you can; he will not be wearied with you, nor will he, like the lords of the earth, disdain you. If you love him, you will not be at a loss what to say to him. Tell him whatever occurs to you respecting yourself and your affairs, as you would do to a dear friend. Do not regard him as a haughty prince, who will treat only with the great and of great things: our God is pleased to abase himself to treat with us, and is pleased with our communicating to him our most minute and trivial affairs. He loves you as much, and has as much care of you, as though he had

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no others to think of but you. He is as much devoted to your interests, as though his providence were to succour only you; his omnipotence to help only you; his mercy and goodness to compassionate only you, to promote your welfare, and to gain by his endearing ways your confidence and your love. Freely therefore discover to him the whole of your interior, and beseech him so to guide you, that you may perfectly follow his will, and that all your desires and intentions may be solely directed to please him and to gratify his divine heart: 'Bless God at all times: and desire of him to direct thy ways, and that all thy counsels may abide in him.' Tobias iv. 20.

13. Say not: of what use is it to discover all my wants to God; he knows and sees them better than I do myself? He knows them, but he will proceed with you as though he were ignorant of them, if you speak not to him about them and crave not his assistance. Our blessed Saviour was well aware of the death of Lazarus, yet he seemed not to know of it until Mary told him, when he consoled her by raising her brother to life again.

14. Hence whenever you are afflicted with infirmity, temptation, persecution, or any other trial, betake yourself immediately to him and implore his assistance. It will be

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sufficient for you to represent to him what it is that afflicts you, saying, 'Behold, O Lord, for I am in distress.' Lam. i. 20; and he will not delay to console you, or at least to give you strength to bear your trial with patience; which will be of more advantage to you than if he should deliver you from it. Make known to him all the thoughts which torment you, whether of fear or of sadness, or of any other evil tendency, and say to him: In thee, O God, are placed all my hopes; I offer this tribulation to thee, and I resign myself to thy will: take pity on me; either deliver me from it, or give me strength to support it. And he will immediately be mindful of the promise which he has recorded in his Gospel, of consoling and comforting all those who in tribulation have recourse to him; 'Come to me all you that labour, and are burdened, and I will refresh you.' St. Matt. xi. 28.

15. He is not offended, when, labouring under afflictions, you seek comfort from your friends, but he would have you have recourse principally to him. At least therefore when you have had recourse to creatures, and they have not been able to console your heart, go to your Creator, and say to him: Lord, men have only words; they cannot afford me consolation, nor do I any more desire to be consoled by them; thou alone

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art my only hope, thou alone my only love; by thee alone do I desire to be comforted, and may my consolation be, to do on this occasion what will be most pleasing to thee. Behold, I am ready to endure this trial for the whole of my life and for all eternity, if such should be thy will, but do thou assist me.

16. Do not be afraid lest he should be offended, if you should sometimes sweetly complain to him, saying: 'Why, O Lord, hast thou retired afar off?' Ps. ix. 1. Lord, thou knowest that I love thee, and that I desire nothing but thy love: have pity on me and help me, do not abandon me. And when desolation continues for a long time and grievously afflicts you, unite your voice with that of your afflicted and dying Jesus on the cross, and, imploring his pity, say to him: 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' St. Matt. xxvii. 46. Let the thought that, having offended God, you do not deserve his consolations, serve only to humble you the more; and let the conviction that God does or permits all for your good, animate you to greater confidence in him. When you are more than usually troubled and disconsolate, say to him, courageously: 'The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear?' Ps. xxvi. 1. Thou, O Lord, will enlighten me and save

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me; in thee do I confide: 'In thee, O Lord, have I hoped, let me never be confounded.' Ps. xxx. 1. And thus be pacified, knowing that 'no one has ever hoped in him and has been confounded.' Eccl. ii. 11. Reflect, that your God loves you more than you can love yourself: of what are you afraid? David consoled himself saying: 'The Lord is careful for me.' Ps. xxxix. 18. Say to him then: I cast myself into thy arms, O Lord; and I desire to think only of loving and pleasing thee. Behold, I am ready to do whatever thou requirest of me. Thou art not only desirous but solicitous for my good; to thee therefore do I commit my salvation. In thee do I rest, and will ever rest, since thou desirest that I should place all my hopes in thee: 'In peace, in the self same, I will sleep and I will rest: for thou, O Lord, hast singularly settled me in hope.' Ps. iv. 9, 10.

17. 'Think of the Lord in goodness.' Wisdom i. 1. With these words the wise man exhorts us to have more confidence in the divine mercy, than fear of the divine justice; since God is immensely more inclined to bestow favours upon us than to chastise us, as St. James says: 'Mercy exalteth itself above judgment.' ii. 13.—Hence the Apostle St. Peter admonishes us in our fears for our temporal and eternal interests, to abandon ourselves entirely to the goodness of our

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God, who takes sovereign care of our salvation: 'Casting all your care upon him, for he hath care of you.' 1 Eph. v. 7. How very applicable to this is the title which David gives to God, when he calls him our God, our God, who is ready to save us: 'Our God is the God of salvation.' Ps. lxvii. 21. This signifies, as Bellarmin explains it, that it is the property of God, not indeed to condemn, but to save all: for while he threatens those with his displeasure who despise him, he promises, and hence cannot fail to show mercy to those who fear him, according to that of the Blessed Virgin, in her Canticle: *His mercy is from generation to generation, to them that fear him.* I place before you, devout soul, all these passages of the holy Scriptures, that when troubled with doubts whether or no you will be saved, whether or no you are of the number of the predestinate, you may take courage at the thought that you know from God's promises that he desires to save you, if you are resolved to serve and love him as he requires you.

18. When you receive any agreeable news, do not act like some unfaithful and ungrateful souls, who in time of tribulation have recourse to God, but in time of prosperity forget and forsake him. Be as faithful to him as you would be to a loving friend, who rejoices in your good; go and communicate

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to him your gladness, and praise and thank him, acknowledging all as coming from his hands; rejoice in your happiness, because it comes to you from his good pleasure, and thus rejoice and be glad solely in him: 'I will rejoice in the Lord: and I will joy in God my Jesus.' Habac. iii. 18. Say to him: My Jesus, I bless thee, and will for ever bless thee for the many favours which thou hast bestowed upon me, when I deserved from thee, not favours, but punishments for the offences which I have committed against thee. Say to him with the sacred Spouse: 'All fruits, the new and the old, my beloved, I have kept for thee.' vii. 13. I thank thee, O Lord, and will ever remember thy past and present benefits, to honour and glorify thee for them for all eternity.

19. But if you love your God, you ought to rejoice more in him than in your own happiness. He who has a great love for his friend, rejoices more on account of his friend's good than if it were his own. Rejoice then in knowing that your God is infinitely happy; frequently say to him: O Lord, I rejoice more in thy felicity, than in all my own good, because I love thee more than I love myself.

20. Another mark of confidence most pleasing to your most loving God, is, when you commit any fault, not to be ashamed to go

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and cast yourself immediately at his feet and beg his pardon for it. Think that God is so ready to pardon sinners, that he laments their loss, when they depart from him, and die to his grace; and hence he lovingly calls them, saying: 'Why will you die, O house of Israel? Return ye and live.' Ezek. xviii. 31. He promises to receive the soul that has forsaken him, as soon as it shall return to his arms: 'Turn ye to me.....and I will turn to you.' Zach. i. 3. Would that sinners knew with how much compassion our Lord waits to pardon them! 'The Lord waiteth that he may have mercy on you.' Isa. xxx. 18. Would that they were sensible of his desire, not indeed to chastise them, but to see them converted, to embrace and to press them to his heart! He declares: 'As I live, saith the Lord God, I desire not the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live.' Ezek. xxxiii. 11. He adds: 'And then come, and accuse me, saith the Lord: if your sins be as scarlet, they shall be made white as snow.' Isa. i. 18. As though he had said: Sinners, repent for having offended me, and then come to me; if I do not pardon you, *accuse me*, and treat me as being unfaithful to my promises: but no, I shall not be wanting to my word: if you come, know that your consciences,

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though stained as crimson with your crimes, shall by my grace be made white as snow.

21. In fine, he has said, that when the sinner repents for having offended him, he will forget all his sins: 'I will not remember all his iniquities that he hath done.' Ezek. xviii.

22. As soon then as you fall into any fault, raise up your eyes to God, make an act of love, and humbly confessing your fault, firmly hope for pardon, saying to him: 'Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick.' St. John xi. 3; the heart which thou lovest is sick, is full of wounds: *Heal my soul, for I have sinned against thee.* Thou seekest after penitent sinners, behold, one is at thy feet, who seeks after thee: the evil is committed; what must I do? Thou wilt not have me lose confidence; even after the sin which I have committed, thou desirest my good, and I again love thee: yes, my God, I love thee with all my heart, I am sorry for my sin, and will never more offend thee; thou who art a God *sweet and mild and plenteous in mercy*, pardon me; let me hear from thee what thou didst say to Magdalen: *thy sins are forgiven thee;* and give me strength for the future to be faithful to thee.

22. Then cast your eyes upon Jesus Christ crucified, in order not to be discouraged, offer to the Eternal Father his merits, and confidently hope for pardon; since to pardon

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you, *he spared not his own Son.* Say to him with confidence: *Look on the face of thy Christ:* my God, have regard to thy Son who has died for me, and for his sake grant me pardon. Attend, especially, devout soul, to what is commonly taught by masters of a spiritual life, who recommend you to have recourse immediately to God after you have fallen, although you should repeat this a hundred times in the day, and, having done this, not to be any longer disturbed; otherwise, if your soul remain discouraged and troubled on account of the fault which you have committed, it will be able to treat but little with God, it will lose confidence, its desire to love him will be cooled; and you will be but little able to go forward in the way of the Lord. On the contrary, by having recourse immediately to God, and begging him to pardon you, promising amendment for the future, your very falls will help you to advance in divine love. Amongst friends, who really love one another, it not unfrequently happens, that, when one offends another, and then humbles himself and asks pardon, their friendship becomes stronger than ever. Do you in like manner; so that your defects may serve to unite you still more closely in love with your God.

23. In whatever doubt may occur to you, either concerning yourself or others, as true

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friends would consult together, so do you never fail to consult God with confidence, and to beseech him to enlighten you to determine upon what will be most pleasing to him: 'Put thou words in my mouth, and strengthen the resolution in my heart.' Jud. ix. 18. O Lord, make known to me what thou wouldst have me to do or to answer, and I will obey thy will: *Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth.*

24. Confide in him so as to recommend to him not only your own necessities, but those also of others. How pleasing will it be to your God, if, sometimes forgetful of your own interests, you choose to speak to him of his own glory, of the miseries of others, especially of those who mourn in tribulation, of the souls his spouses who are in purgatory, who sigh to behold him, and of poor sinners who are deprived of his grace! Say to him, particularly for these; Lord, thou art so amiable that thou art worthy of infinite love; and how canst thou then endure to behold so many souls in the world, upon whom thou bestowest so many benefits, who desire not to know thee, nor to love thee, who even offend thee and despise thee! Ah, my most amiable God, cause thyself to be known, cause thyself to be loved: *Hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come;* may thy name be adored and loved by all; and may thy love

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reign in the hearts of all. Suffer me not to depart without granting me some grace for the unhappy souls for whom I pray.

25. It is said that those who in this life have but little longing for heaven, are punished in purgatory with a particular suffering, called the pain of languor. And with reason, because to long but little for heaven is to make but little account of the great happiness of that eternal kingdom, which our blessed Redeemer purchased for us by his death. Forget not therefore, devout soul, frequently to sigh after heaven, saying to your God, that your soul longeth and fainteth to see and to love him face to face. Desire to be liberated from your exile, from this world of sin and the danger of forfeiting divine grace, that you may arrive in that land of love, where you may love God with all your powers. Say to him frequently: So long, O Lord, as I remain upon the earth, I am ever in danger of forsaking thee and of losing thy love: when shall I quit this life, in which I so frequently offend thee, when shall I love thee with all my soul, and be united with thee without the fear of being ever again separated from thee? St. Teresa was always sighing in this manner after heaven; and hence, when she heard the clock strike, she rejoiced at the thought that another hour of life and of the danger

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of losing God was past and gone. She had such a strong desire to die that she might see God, that she was dying with the desire to die, as she expressed it in the beginning of one of her hymns.

26. In a word, if you desire to delight the loving heart of your God, be careful, as much as possible, constantly to speak to him, and with the greatest confidence that he will not disdain to answer you and converse with you. He will not indeed make his voice audible to your corporeal sense of hearing, but very intelligible to your heart, when you withdraw yourself from the conversation of creatures to entertain yourself only with him: 'I will lead her into solitude, and I will speak to her heart.' Hosea ii. 14. He will speak to you by those inspirations, those internal lights, those manifestations of his bounty, those sweet impressions in the heart, those marks of pardon, those feelings of peace, those hopes of heaven, those interior rejoicings, that sweetness of his grace; those loving embraces, in a word, by those expressions of love which are well understood by those who love and who seek only him.

27. Finally, in order briefly to remind you here of what has been said above, I shall recommend to you a devout practice, by which you may render all your daily actions

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pleasing to God. When you awake in the morning, let your first thought be to raise up your mind to God, to offer to his honour whatever you may have to do or suffer during the day, and to beseech him to assist you with his holy grace. Then perform your other morning devotions, making acts of love and of gratitude, and praying, and resolving to spend the day as if it were to be the last of your life. Father Sanguirè recommends the making a covenant with God, that, as often as you make a certain sign, such as placing your hand upon your heart, or raising your eyes towards heaven, or to the crucifix and the like, you will thereby intend to make an act of love, of desire to see him loved by all, of oblation of yourself to him and the like. When then you have made the above-mentioned acts, having placed your soul in the side of Jesus and under the mantle of Mary and having besought the Eternal Father, for the love of Jesus and of Mary, to protect you through the day, proceed immediately, before you do any thing else, to make your meditation, which should continue for at least half an hour; and let it be your delight principally to dwell on the sorrows, outrages and sufferings which Jesus Christ endured in his passion. This, of all subjects is the most dear to devout souls, and excites them most to the

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love of God. Three devotions above all others should be your constant practice, if you would improve in a spiritual life: devotion to the passion of Jesus Christ, to the Blessed Sacrament and to the ever Blessed Virgin. In your meditation make frequent acts of contrition, of the love of God, and of oblation of your whole self to him. The Ven. Father Charles Caraffa said that a fervent act of the love of God, made in the morning meditation was sufficient to maintain the soul in fervour throughout the whole day.

28. Be exact in your other devout practices of going to confession and communion, reciting office, &c. When you are about to be employed in external duties, in study, or labour, or any other occupation belonging to your state, at the beginning of every action, offer it up to God, beseeching him to assist you to perform it well, and afterwards frequently retire into the cell of your own heart and unite yourself to God, as St. Catharine of Sienna was accustomed to do. In a word, whatever you do, do it with God and for God. When you leave your room, or go out of the house, and when you return, say a "Hail Mary," to recommend yourself to the Blessed Virgin. When you go to your meals offer to God whatever may be offensive or grateful to your appetite in your

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eating or drinking; and after your meals return him thanks, saying: How good indeed art thou, O Lord, to one who has so much offended thee! During the day give some time to spiritual reading, make a visit to the Blessed Sacrament, and to the most holy Mary; in the evening recite the Rosary and make an examination of your conscience, with acts of faith, hope, love, contrition, resolution of amendment, and of receiving during your life, as well as at your death, the holy Sacraments, with an intention of gaining all the indulgences attached to them. When you go to bed, think that you have deserved to lie in the fire of hell, and compose yourself to rest in the embraces of the crucifix, saying: *In peace, in the self-same, I will sleep, and I will rest.*

29. And here I would incidentally remind you, in a few words, of the many indulgences which are granted for the reciting of certain prayers or the observance of other devout practices, and of which, in the morning, you should make an intention of gaining as many as you are able. To those who recite the acts of faith, hope and charity, an indulgence of seven years is granted for each day, and for every month a plenary indulgence, which may also be applied to the souls in purgatory and to themselves at the hour of death. Thus also direct your

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attention to the gaining of the indulgences granted for the reciting of the Rosary, with blest rosaries, the Angelus three times a day, the Litany of the Blessed Virgin, the Salva Regina, the Hail Mary, and the Glory be to the Father, for saying: "Blessed be the holy and immaculate and most pure Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary;" as also for saying: "Praise be to the most Blessed Sacrament now and for ever;" for the reciting of the prayer "Soul of Christ;" for the bowing of the head at the "Glory be to the Father" and the sacred names of Jesus and Mary; for hearing Mass, for making half an hour's meditation, for which, besides the partial indulgence, there is also a plenary indulgence when continued for a month, with a confession and communion during that time; for genuflecting before the Blessed Sacrament and for kissing the cross. Always have an intention of gaining whatever indulgences are attached to the pious practices which you usually observe.

30. In order that you may be able to keep yourself recollected and in union with God, as far as this life will permit, endeavour by means of all things which you see or hear to raise up your mind to God and to direct your views to eternity. For example, when you see a bubble glide along, think that thus also your life is running on, and that you are

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approaching to your grave. When you see a lamp going out for want of oil, think that, one day, your life will end in like manner. When you behold tombs, or the bodies of the dead, think that you must become what they are. When you see the great ones of this world rejoicing in honours and riches, pity their folly and say: For me, my God is my all: 'Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we will call upon the name of the Lord our God.' Ps. xix. 8. They may glory in such vain things, but let me glory only in the grace of God, and in his holy love. When you behold pompous funerals, or the magnificent monuments of the great, say: if their souls be lost, what will all these pomps avail them? When you look upon the tranquil or stormy sea, consider the difference which there is between a soul in grace and one in the state of mortal sin. When you see a withered tree, consider a soul devoid of God, which is fit for nothing but to be cast into the fire. If you should ever see a criminal, accused of some great crime, trembling with shame and fear before his judge, father or prelate, consider what will be the terror of the sinner before Christ as his judge. When it thunders, and you are in fear, think of the dread which the damned will for ever experience in continually hearing the thunders of divine wrath.

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If you should see one condemned to death, and hear him exclaiming in affliction: Is there then nothing that can prevent my death? consider what will be the despair of a soul when it shall be condemned to hell, and shall exclaim: Is there then nothing that can prevent my eternal ruin?

31. When you see the country, the sea coast, flowers, or fruits, which delight you with their scent, or appearance, say: see how many beautiful things God has created for me in this world, in order that I may love him: and what delights has he not prepared for me in heaven! St. Teresa said that when she beheld beautiful hills or coasts, they reproached her for her ingratitude to God. And the Abbé de Rancé said that these beautiful works of creation reminded him and obliged him to love God. St. Augustine said the same, exclaiming: "Heaven and earth and all things in them bid me love thee." It is related of a holy man, that seeing flowers and herbs as he passed through the fields, he was accustomed to strike them with his staff, saying: be silent, do not any more reproach me with ingratitude to God; I have heard you, be silent, no more. St. Mary Magdalen of Pazzi, when she held in her hand a fruit or a flower, she felt herself excited by it to divine love, saying within herself: behold, my

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God has thought from all eternity of creating this fruit, this flower, as a mark of his love towards me.

32. When you see rivers or brooks, think that as their waters run towards the sea, and never stand still, so you ought ever to tend towards God, who is your only good. When you are conveyed any where by horses, say to yourself: see how these innocent animals fatigue themselves to serve me: and what exertion do I make to serve and to please my God? When you see a dog, for the sake of a miserable bit of bread, so faithful to his master, think how much more faithful you ought to be to God, who has created you, who preserves you, who provides for you, and who loads you with so many benefits. When you hear birds singing, say: my soul, hear how these little creatures praise God their Maker; and what dost thou do? And then praise him yourself in acts of divine love. On the contrary, when you hear the cock crow, recollect that you also, like Peter, have denied your God, and renew your sorrow and tears. Thus also when you see any house or place in which you have sinned, turn to God and say: 'The sins of my youth and my ignorances, do not remember, O Lord.' Ps. xxiv. 7.

33. When you see vallies, consider that,

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as the waters descend into them from the mountains, and fertilize them, so graces from heaven leave the proud and descend into the humble and enrich them. When you see a church beautifully adorned, consider the beauty of a soul in grace, which is truly the temple of God. When you look upon the sea, consider the greatness and immensity of God. When you see fire or candles lighted on the altar, say: for how many years ought I to have been burning in hell? But since thou, O Lord, hast not yet consigned me to that place of woe, grant that my heart may now burn with thy holy love, even as this fuel or these candles. When you behold the heavens and the stars, say with St. Andrew of Avellino: my feet will one day tread upon those stars.

34. In order frequently to remind yourself of the mysteries of our Saviour's love for us, when you see hay, a manger, or caves, think of your infant Jesus in the stable of Bethlehem. When you see a saw, or a plane, or a hatchet, remember how Jesus worked as an ordinary youth in the cottage of Nazareth. If you see cords, thorns, nails, or beams of wood, think on the sorrows and death of our blessed Redeemer. St. Francis of Assisium, when he saw a lamb, was accustomed to shed tears, saying: my dear Lord was led as a lamb to the slaughter to

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die for me. When you see an altar, chalice, or bread, call to mind the great love which Jesus has shown us in bestowing upon us the most holy Sacrament of the Eucharist.

35. Frequently offer yourself to God in the course of the day, as St. Teresa did, saying: behold me, O Lord: do with me what thou wilt; make known to me what I must do to please thee, I desire to do all that thou requirest of me. Make repeated acts of divine love. The same Saint said that acts of love are the fuel which feed and maintain holy love in the soul. When you see any of the brute creation that know not how to love God, and are incapable of loving him, excite yourself to make the more acts of love, seeing that you are capable of loving him. When you fall into any defect, immediately humble yourself, and with a most fervent act of love endeavour to rise again. When any untoward circumstance happens, immediately offer up the mortification which it occasions you to God, be conformed to his holy will, and accustom yourself on all such occasions to repeat: thus does God will, thus also do I will. Acts of resignation are acts of love most dear and grateful to the heart of God.

36. When you are about to resolve upon any undertaking, or to give important advice, recommend yourself to God before you

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resolve or answer. Repeat as often as you can in the day: *Incline unto my aid, O God; O Lord make haste to help me*, as St. Rose of Lima was accustomed to do. And for this end turn yourself frequently to the crucifix or image of the Blessed Virgin, and fail not frequently to invoke the names of Jesus and Mary, especially in time of temptation. God, being infinite bounty, has the greatest desire to communicate his graces to us. The Ven. Father Alphonsus Alvarez on one occasion saw our blessed Saviour with his hands loaded with graces, going about seeking to whom to dispense them; but he will have us ask him for them: *ask, and you shall receive*, otherwise he will withdraw his hands: on the contrary he will voluntarily open them to those who invoke him. And who, says Ecclesiasticus, has ever had recourse to God, and God has despised him and refused to hear him? 'Who hath called upon him, and he despised him?' Eccl. ii. 12. And David declares that God showeth not only mercy, but great mercy to those who invoke him: 'For thou, O Lord, art sweet and mild and plenteous in mercy to all that call upon thee.' Ps. lxxxv. 5.

37. Oh how good and liberal is the Lord to them that lovingly seek him! 'The Lord is good.....to the soul that seeketh him.' Lam. iii. 25. He is to be found even by those

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who do not seek him: 'I was found by them that did not seek me.' Rom. x. 20. How much more willingly will he be found by those who do seek him in order to love and serve him?

In fine, St. Teresa says that the souls of the just in this life have to conform themselves by love to what the blessed do in heaven. As the saints in heaven treat only with God, and have no other thought nor delight but his glory and love; so must you have no other thought nor employment. In this world let God be your only happiness, the only object of your affections, the only end of your actions and wishes, until you arrive in the eternal kingdom, where your love will be consummated and made perfect, and your desires completely fulfilled and satisfied.

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CONSOLATION

AND

Encouragement for a Soul

IN A STATE OF

SPIRITUAL DESOLATION.

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CONSOLATION AND ENCOURAGEMENT

FOR A SOUL

In a state of Spiritual Desolation.

A Dialogue between a Pastor and Penitent.

Pastor.—Tell me what these troubles of conscience are, which give you so much uneasiness.

Penitent.—For about two years I have never found God, neither in meditation, nor before the Blessed Sacrament, nor in the Holy Communion. My soul seems to be devoid of love, of hope, and of faith; in a word, abandoned by Almighty God. Neither the passion of Jesus Christ, nor the most holy Eucharist, any longer affects me, and I am become quite insensible to all feelings of devotion. I acknowledge that I have merited all this, for by my sins I have deserved hell.

Pastor.—Have you confessed your sins?

Penitent.—Yes, Father, I confessed them when I made a general confession, and have many times since confessed them.

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Pastor.—And what does your director tell you?

Penitent.—He forbids me to mention sins of my past life any more; but I always feel uneasy, fearing lest I should not have properly explained myself. Besides, I am tormented with a thousand temptations of infidelity, impurity, and pride: I reject them, but still I am always afraid of having given some tacit consent to them.

Pastor.—And what does your director say with regard to such thoughts?

Penitent.—He wishes me not to accuse myself of them, unless I could immediately take an oath that I have consented to them. What do you say? Give me some instructions to relieve me.

Pastor.—What do I say? I tell you to rely more on obedience to your director. Have you ever read what St. Philip Neri teaches on this point? He says: "He who obeys his director, is freed from responsibility to God for what he does:" and again, "We ought to have confidence in our director, because God will not suffer him to go astray, and because nothing can so effectually break through the snares of the devil as obedience to our director in spiritual matters, and because, on the other hand, nothing is more dangerous than to be willing to direct ourselves by our own judgment." Have

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you read St. Francis of Sales? He says, speaking of obedience to our director: "This is the advice of all advices: Though you search, says the devout Avila, you shall never so assuredly find the will of God as by the way of this humble obedience, so much recommended and practised by the ancient saints." St. Teresa says the same: "Let the soul consult her confessor with a determination to think no more for her own direction, but to rely upon those words of our Lord: 'He who hears you, hears me.' St. Luke x. 16. God has such a great esteem for this kind of submission, that, although with a thousand struggles, although what is judged to be proper for us may appear folly, still, whether painful to us or not, we ought to perform it, for by so doing we shall accomplish the divine will."

St. John of the Cross, speaking in the name of Jesus Christ, says; "By being unfaithful to your confessor, you are unfaithful to me, who have said: *He who despises you, despises me.*" And he adds: "Not to be satisfied with what your confessor tells you, is pride, and a want of faith." The Saint says this on account of those words mentioned above: "*He who hears you, hears me.*" Hence St. Francis of Sales, on this head, lays down these most useful maxims:—I. "A truly obedient soul has never yet been lost."

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II. "Be satisfied with knowing from your director that such a thing is right, without seeking for the reasons for its being so." This ought to be a powerful admonition to those scrupulous souls who always wish to know the reason of what their director imposes upon them.—III. St. Francis adds another excellent maxim, as a consequence of the two former, and says: "The best is to walk on blindly, under Divine Providence, through the darkness and perplexities of this life."

This doctrine of obedience in doubts of conscience to a director, is that of all the Doctors and Holy Fathers of the Church. St. Bernard shall speak for all: he says: "Whatever man enjoins on the part of God, if it be not evidently displeasing to God, ought to be received as though God himself enjoined it."

In short, obedience to God's Ministers is the only and most secure means of calming doubts of conscience left us by Jesus Christ; for which we ought to return him our sovereign thanks. Without it how could a scrupulous soul find in her doubts perfect security or rest? The trial of scrupulosity (which of all others is the most afflicting to those who love God, more so than sickness, or persecution, or any similar crosses) has been endured by almost all the Saints. St. Tere-

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sa, St. Mary Magdalen of Pazzi, St Jane Frances de Chantal and many others, how were they pacified? by obedience. Now, what do you say? Are you convinced that you will be safe in obeying your director?

Penitent.—Yes, Father, I am convinced; but why, after being obedient to my director for these two years, do I not experience more devotion?

Pastor.—Now I know where your fault lies; why do you say that you cannot find peace of soul? Do you seek to discover the will of God, or do you look for consolations and spiritual sweetness; if you wish to become a Saint, from this day forward seek only the will of God, who wills your sanctification, and not your consolation in this life. If you have no consolation, be consoled with the hope that your comforter is with you. Do you complain of two years of aridity? St. Jane Frances de Chantal suffered forty years of aridity. St. Mary Magdalen of Pazzi suffered five years of interior trials and temptations, without the least comfort, and, after these five years, she besought God not to grant her sensible consolations in this life. St. Philip Neri was so inflamed with divine love, that he sometimes exclaimed: "O Jesus, never have I yet loved thee; would that I did really love thee!" On other occasions he would say;

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"As yet I do not know thee, O Jesus, because I do not seek thee." On others: "I would indeed love thee, O Jesus, but I know not how to love thee. I seek thee, but I do not find thee." Such are the sentiments of the Saints: and are you so discouraged because you experience aridity and do not find God as you wish to find him?

Penitent.—But they were Saints, and I do not know whether God has forgiven me the many offences which I have committed against him, for I am not sure that I have ever had true contrition for them.

Pastor.—But what? Perhaps you take pleasure in the sins which you have committed?

Penitent.—No, I detest them, I hate them more than death.

Pastor.—And why are you afraid that God has not pardoned you? The holy Fathers say that he who hates the evil which he has committed is sure of the divine forgiveness. And indeed it is certain, as St. Teresa says, that he who is resolved rather to die than offend God, is without doubts sorry for his sins. Tell me, are you resolved to suffer every thing rather than forfeit divine grace?

Penitent.—Yes, father; even by the grace of God, to be torn in pieces rather than deliberately commit even a venial sin.

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Pastor.—Why then should God hate you? You are afraid that God hates you; would that you could be sensible of the love which he now bears you! Do you not know that Jesus Christ is that good Pastor who came down from heaven to restore to life and to save the lost sheep, although it had voluntarily gone astray? And how will he abandon one who is ready to die rather than wilfully give him the least offence.

Penitent.—But who knows but that I may have consented to some grievous sin, and that God on this account has abandoned me?

Pastor.—No, you have no ground for such a supposition. Mortal sin is such a horrible monster that you could not possibly be guilty of it and not be aware of it. No sinner, that has grievously incurred God's displeasure, is in doubt, but is certain, that he has forfeited divine grace: and hence it is a maxim with all masters of a spiritual life, that when a person that fears God is in doubt whether or no he has lost divine grace, it is certain that he has not lost it, precisely because no one loses God without having certain knowledge of it. Hence whenever you are in doubt whether or no you have lost God, be assured that you have not lost him.

Penitent.—But why do I feel no confidence in him?

Pastor.—I will tell you: true confidence

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does not consist in any sensible feeling, but in the will: is it then your desire and will to confide in God? If so, you do confide in him?

Penitent.—But where is my love for God?

Pastor.—The same rule applies to the love of God as to confidence in him. Love as well as confidence is in the will; have you then a will directed to love God? If so, know that you do love him. You desire to have the consolation of sensible love and confidence, but God, for your greater advantage, withholds it from you: be satisfied therefore with possessing them, without being sensible of them. The same applies to faith; it is sufficient for you to have a will to believe all that the Church teaches, without being sensible of believing. The time will come when the clouds will be dispersed, and the light will fill you abundantly with consolation. Until then be content to remain in obscurity, and to abandon yourself to the divine will and mercy.

Let us, in the meantime, encourage ourselves with the assurance of the holy scriptures. God says in one place: 'Turn ye to me, saith the Lord of hosts, and I will turn to you.' Zach. i. 3. If then we desire to possess God, let us renounce creatures, let us lovingly turn to him, and he will lovingly turn to us. He says to all: 'Come to me all that labour, and are burdened, and I

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will refresh you.' St. Matt. xi. 28. O all you that are afflicted, come to me, and I will console you. In another place he says: 'And come and accuse me, saith the Lord; if your sins be as scarlet, they shall be made as white as snow.' Isa. l. 18. That is to say: Come to me, sinners, come and repent, and if I do not pardon you, *accuse me*, reproach me and treat me as unfaithful to my word; but no, however black your consciences may be, I will by my grace make them as white as snow. He pursues sinners, as it were, weeping compassionately for their loss, saying: 'And why will you die, O house of Israel.' Ezek. xviii. 31. As though he should say: and why, O my children, will you be lost, while I am ready to save you, if you will but have recourse to me? If it is thus that he speaks to obstinate sinners, will he reject a soul that desires to love him?

Tell me sincerely, are you entangled with any earthly affection, for persons, or for possessions, or for distinction, or for preference before others? St. John of the Cross says: that every slight attachment, every thread may hinder you from flying to God and from being wholly his.

Penitent.—No: by the grace of God, it seems to me that I am not so much attached to any earthly thing, as that I would for the sake of it commit any deliberate fault, but

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still I am aware that I am full of faults; I am displeased with being despised, and I sometimes resent it.

Pastor.—And after such resentment what do you do?

Penitent.—I humble myself, I beg of God to forgive me, and purpose to do better for the future, relying on Jesus Christ for strength and assistance; but notwithstanding I feel dejected and disturbed, and it seems to me almost impossible ever to become a Saint; it even seems pride to aspire to it.

Pastor.—All is right; continue always to do so; but do not be disquieted, for this is not right; should you fall a hundred times in the day, do always the same, repent, purpose to do better for the future, with the divine assistance, place your trust in Jesus Christ, and be not any longer uneasy. Know that it is not pride, even after a fault, to hope to become a Saint; but it would indeed be pride to lose courage, and to be disquieted, as though your resolutions had secured you from falling again. Humble yourself therefore and confide in God.

Penitent.—Father, since you are so charitable to me, I beg of you to give me some instructions which may comfort me in my difficulties, when I shall not see you.

Pastor.—Well then, I will give you some

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few things written confusedly, simply and without order, which you may read when you find yourself more than usually depressed, and which may encourage you to endure the struggle which every one without exception must undergo in this valley of tears and death.

1. The first thing I recommend to you is strict obedience to your director; be particular in obeying him in every thing; and by every thing I mean whatever you are not certain is sinful. Recollect what St. Teresa says, (as before quoted) that by being obedient to our directors, whether painful to us or not, we are sure to do the will of God. St. Bernard says, that the most certain remedy for scruples is to submit to the judgment of a guide, God himself having appointed this remedy, in order that those who cannot resolve their own doubts and scruples, may be able to do so by the advice of a director, who, although he may be deceived, as the scrupulous will have it, yet will not deceive them; they will be safe in obeying him as a guide divinely appointed them by God.

2. Be careful in all adverse circumstances to receive all as coming from the hands of God, and, especially in time of sickness, be strictly obedient to your physician in using the remedies which he prescribes; explain

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to him all your sufferings without exaggeration, and then be satisfied. Do not crave the compassion of those who visit you, and when any one immoderately commisserates you, say, with Jesus Christ: 'The chalice, which the Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?' St. John xviii. 11. God sends me this sickness, not because he wishes me evil, but because he desires my good; and shall I not calmly accept of it? In sickness it is seen of what spirit a person really is. There are devout persons, who so long as they enjoy good health, are all sweetness and humility, but are no sooner attacked with indisposition than they immediately become impatient and proud, and complain of every body, especially if they have not some remedy or service exactly when they want it. When then you are unwell, endure all without any complaint. In all adversities say with holy Job: 'As it hath pleased the Lord, so it is done. Blessed be the name of the Lord. i. 21. Be careful also to bear with slights and contempt without resenting them: it is seen whether or no a person is humble, when he receives contempt with patience.

3. For the rest be cheerful and of good heart, placing great confidence in Jesus Christ, who is all goodness to them that seek him: 'The Lord is good to the soul that seeks him. No one hath hoped in the

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Lord and hath been confounded.' Eccl. ii. 11. God allows himself to be found even by those who do not seek him, as St. Paul says: 'I was found by them that did not seek me,' Rom. x. 20; reciting Isaias lxv. 1. How much more readily will he present himself to them that do seek him? Be careful then henceforward how you say that God has abandoned you: the Lord abandons only such as are obstinate in their sins, and even these he does not abandon altogether, but is ever nigh to them until their death, assisting them with certain lights that they may not be lost.

4. When a soul endeavours to love God, he cannot help loving such a soul in return: 'I love them that love me.' Prov. viii. 17. And when he hides himself from them that love him, he does it only for their good, to make them more desirous of his grace, and to unite them more closely to himself. Hear what St. Catharine of Genoa said when she was suffering great spiritual dryness, so great that she seemed to herself to be abandoned by God, and that no hope was left her: "How happy am I in this deplorable state! Let my heart be desolate, provided my love be glorified. My dear love, if from this my unhappy state the least glory accrue to thee, I beseech thee to leave me in it for all eternity." And saying this she shed floods of tears in the midst of her desolation.

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5. Know that the lovers of the cross, in time of desolation, unite themselves more closely with God in their own interior. Nothing so much obliges the soul to seek God, and nothing brings God into the soul so much as desolation; because the acts of conformity with the divine will which are made in the time of desolation, are more pure and perfect; and because the greater the desolation, the greater is humility; resignation, confidence, and prayer, are more pure, and hence grace and the divine assistance are more abundant.

6. In order to attain perfection, attend, above all, to the exercise of divine love: the love of God alone, when it becomes master of our hearts, destroys in us all inordinate affections. Wherefore endeavour to make frequent acts of divine love, saying: My God, I love thee, I love thee, I love thee, and hope to expire as I repeat: my God I love thee. The Saints say that the soul ought not less to love than to breathe.

7. Moreover in your meditations offer yourself frequently to God and without reserve.—Say to him with your whole heart: O Jesus, I give myself to thee without reserve. I desire to be all thine, and if I know not how to give myself to thee as I ought, do thou thyself, O Jesus, take possession of me and make me all thine own. St. Teresa offered

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herself to God fifty times in the day. You may do the same. Hence always give him your will, repeating with St. Paul: 'Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?' Acts ix. 6. This act alone was sufficient to change St. Paul from a persecutor of the Church into a vessel of election. Frequently pray with holy David: 'Teach me to do thy will.' Ps. cxlii. 10. Let all your prayers to God, to the Blessed Virgin, to your Angel Guardian and patron Saints be directed to obtain the grace of perfectly accomplishing the will of God. In short, *thy will be done*, may serve you as a remedy for all your evils.

8. And when you experience greater aridity, exercise yourself in taking delight in the infinite happiness which God whom you love enjoys, which is the most perfect act of love of the blessed in heaven, who rejoice not so much in their own happiness as in that of God, since they love him immensely more than they love themselves.

9. As regards the subject of meditation, never cease from meditating on the passion of Jesus Christ. Jesus suffering for the love of us, is the object of all others to attract our hearts. In meditating on the mysteries of the passion, if our Lord be pleased to affect you with tenderness, receive it with gratitude; but if you should experience none, you will at least always receive great com-

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fort in the soul. Go frequently, in particular, to the garden of Gethsemani, as did St. Teresa, saying that there she found him alone; and considering him in his great afflictions, in an agony, sweating blood, and declaring his soul to be sorrowful unto death, you will indeed find comfort in your afflictions, seeing that he suffers all for the love of you. And at the sight of Jesus thus preparing himself to die for you, you will prepare to die for him, and the more you are afflicted, the more will you say with St. Thomas the Apostle: 'Let us also go, that we may die with him.' St. John xi. 16.

10. Go also to Calvary, where you will find him expiring upon the cross, exhausted with sufferings, and, seeing him in this state, it will be impossible for you not to be encouraged to suffer willingly all things for a God who dies in sorrow for the love of you. St. Paul protested that he neither knew, nor desired to know, any thing in this life but Jesus Christ crucified: 'For I judged not myself to know any thing among you, but Jesus Christ and him crucified.' 1 Cor. ii. 2. St. Bonaventure says that he who desires to preserve a constant devotion to Jesus Christ, ought ever to look upon him with the eyes of the mind dying on the cross. And thus in all your fears look on the crucifix, take cour-

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age, and animate yourself to suffer for his love.

11. Above all, I recommend to you prayer. Although you should say nothing else, it would be sufficient to say: *Incline unto my aid, O God. O Lord, make haste to help me.* You know that the Church obliges her priests and religious to repeat this very often; and St. Philip Neri advised this prayer to be said as a chaplet sixty-three times in the day. Our Lord has promised to grant us what we ask: *Ask and it shall be given to you.* St. Bernard was in ecstasy when he thought of the words of Jesus Christ to the sons of Zebedee, who said to him: 'Master, we desire that whatsoever we shall ask, thou wouldst do it for us. But he said to them: What would you that I should do for you?' St. Mark x. 35.

12. All the graces which you ask for of God, ask for them always in the name of Jesus Christ. Whatever we receive from God, we receive through the merits of Jesus Christ. And our blessed Redeemer has promised us, that whatever we ask of God in his name, the Father will give to us: 'Amen, Amen, I say to you: if you ask the Father any thing in my name, he will give it you.' St. John xvi. 23. Now, when you fear lest God should condemn you to hell, think if it be possible that he should say to you,

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ask what you please of me and I will give it you, and, at the same time, have the will to consign you to that place of torments.

13. But perhaps, because you are in desolation, you are willing to suppose that God hates you? You ought not thus to afflict yourself, but to be the more consoled, seeing that God treats you as he treats the souls of his dearest servants, and as he has treated his own Son, of whom the scripture says: 'And the Lord was pleased to bruise him in infirmity.' Isa. liii. 10. He was pleased that he should be consumed and broken to pieces with grief and torments.

14. When you are alarmed at the thought that God may wish to abandon you on account of your ingratitude, do as did the two disciples, who, while they were going to Emaus, Jesus accompanied them in the form of a pilgrim, and when they drew near the place, our Lord appeared to wish to go forward, *and he made as though he would go farther, but they*, says the Evangelist, *constrained him saying: Stay with us because it is towards evening.* And he was pleased to enter into the house, and to remain with them: 'And he went in with them.' St. Luke xxiv. 28, 29. And thus you also, when it appears to you that our Lord wishes to leave you, constrain him to remain with you, and say to him: My Jesus, *stay with me*, I

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am unwilling that thou shouldst leave me; if thou leave me, to whom shall I go for comfort or safety? 'Lord, to whom shall we go?' St. John vi. 69. And thus continuing to pray to him with love and tenderness, fear not, but be assured that he will not leave you. Say to him with the Apostle: 'Neither death, nor life.....nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God.' Rom. viii. 38, 39. Say to him: my Saviour shew thyself disdainful of me when thou pleasest, but neither the fear of death, not the desire of life, nor any creature in the world, shall be able to separate me from thy love. Say indeed what St. Francis of Sales said when he was a young man, and, being in a state of aridity, the devil suggested to him that he was doomed to hell; he answered: "And since I shall not be able to love my God in eternity, I will love him at least in this life as much as I am able." Saying this he regained the tranquillity of his mind and the peace of his soul.

15. As often as you desire to love God, dilate your heart. 'Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it.' Ps. lxxx. 11. That is to say, that the more we hope in God, the more we shall receive from him. He himself has declared that he favours them that confide in him: 'He is the protector of all that trust in him.' Ps. xvii. 31. And when you doubt

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whether the Lord regards you, imagine that you hear him reprove you as he did St. Peter, saying to you: 'O thou of little faith, why didst thou doubt?' St. Matt. xiv. 31. Why dost thou doubt whether I have regard to thee, knowing my promise that I will listen to all who pray to me? And because he is willing to hear us, he desires that we should believe that he will certainly hear us, when we ask for graces from him: 'All things whatsoever you ask, when ye pray, believe that you shall receive: and they shall come unto you.' St. Mark xi. 24. Take notice of the words, *believe that you shall receive.* It is necessary then to ask graces of God with a firm confidence, without doubting whether we shall receive them, as St. James exhorts us: 'Let him ask in faith, nothing wavering.' St. James i. 6. Treating with a God who is all bounty, have full confidence in him, and drive away all melancholy. He who serves God and is sad, instead of honouring him, almost dishonours him. St. Bernard says that he who represents to himself God as stern and severe, wrongs him, being as he is all goodness and mercy. How can you doubt, says the Saint, whether Jesus will forgive you your sins, when he has nailed them to the cross, on which he died for you, with the nails which pierced his hands and feet?

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16. God has declared that his delight is to be with us: 'My delight is to be with the children of men.' Prov. viii. 31. If then it is God's delight to treat with us, it is just that all our delight should be to treat with him. And this thought ought to animate us to treat with God with the greatest confidence, and to take care to pass the remainder of our lives with this our God, who so loves us, and in whose blessed company we hope to live for eternity.

17. Let us then treat with him with the greatest confidence and love, as with our most dear and affectionate friend, who loves us more than any other. O God! scrupulous souls treat thee as a tyrant, who requires nothing else from his subjects but reserve and fear, and hence are afraid that at every word spoken inconsiderately, at every thought that passes through the mind, thou becomest enraged against them, and wishest to plunge them into hell. But no; God does not deprive us of his grace, unless we deliberately slight it and wilfully turn our backs upon him. And when we commit some light offence against him, by some venial sin, this certainly displeases him, but he does not on this account deprive us of the same love which he had for us, hence he is immediately appeased with an act of repentance and love.

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18. His infinite majesty is deserving of all reverence and humility, but from souls that love him he is more pleased to be treated with loving confidence than with timid subjection; and hence treat not God any more as a tyrant. Remind yourself of the graces which he has bestowed upon you, even after the offences and ingratitude which you have been guilty of against him. Call to your recollection the loving attractions by which he has withdrawn you from a disorderly life, the extraordinary lights which he has communicated to you, by which he has so often called you to his love, and hence from this day forward treat with God with great confidence and tenderness, as with the dearest object which you possess. Let us pass on.

19. It is not necessary to recommend you to approach the Sacraments frequently, because you already do so. Go to confession twice in the week or at least once. As to communion, obey your director, and although you feel dry, fail not to request it; because directors regulate the communions of their penitents by the desire which they discover in them for communion. When your director sees that you do not ask him to go to communion, and that you do not evince any desire for it, he will hardly of himself require you to receive it. And when you do not really communicate, make at least a spirit-

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ual communion; and this you may repeat several times in the day.

20. Let then these two great mysteries of the most holy Sacrament of the altar and of the passion of Jesus Christ, be the dearest objects of your heart. If the love of all hearts were united in one, assuredly it would not be sufficient to correspond with the love which Jesus Christ has shown us in these mysteries. Continue then for the remainder of your life, to love and to confide in God, and be not grieved when you find yourself in afflictions and trials, for these are not a sign of the hatred but of the love of God towards you. That you may be induced to do this, I shall adduce for you, as a conclusion to this little treatise, the example of St. Liduina Virgin, whose history affords one of the most extraordinary instances of bodily affliction and spiritual desolation recorded in the lives of the Saints. She was born of poor parents, in the country of Olanda, called Scedan. When she was a girl, one day walking on the ice, she fell and broke one of her ribs. Not being taken care of on account of her poverty, an abscess formed on the broken rib, which broke of itself, and brought her whole frame into a diseased state, so that she became a paralytic. Her parents abandoned her and took no care of her, she suffered intensely, all the mem-

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bers of her body were contracted, except the head and left side, the right arm was wholly useless, while she was so afflicted with St. Antony's fire that it ate into her very bones, but she did not dare to speak of her sufferings, for fear of her parents.

21. Her head was racked with continual and acute pains; she had a large wound on her forehead, and her chin was half opened to the mouth and full of congealed blood, which prevented her from speaking and eating. One of her eyes was sunk and become quite useless, the other was so full of humours that she could not bear the light of the sun, and scarcely that of a lamp. She suffered such pains in her teeth as almost to kill her. She had a continual discharge of blood either from the mouth, the nose, the eyes, or the ears. She had a discharge in her throat, which made it very difficult for her to breathe. She was tormented with continual fever; she suffered a constant vomiting, throwing up great quantities of bloody water, however little food she took. She was also dropsical, hectic and consumptive, left destitute by all, and without any one to help her. On some occasions, through compassion, medicine was administered to her, but this redoubled her martyrdom, yet she took it obediently as a lamb, without complaint. Her parents being poor, and an-

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noyed with her many maladies, reproached her, saying that she was born only to torment them and to consume whatever little they had in the house, and that it would be well if death would take her away from them. She wept, but not for her own maladies, but on account of the trouble which she occasioned others.

22. Not being able to move herself, she lay always on her back, which became so putrified that her skin stuck to the bed, that is, to the straw on which she lay abandoned; hence when any one out of compassion raised her up, her skin remained fast to the straw, and her body was in a manner scarified. In short, to see that poor girl of fifteen on her bed of straw, was the same as to see a corpse on a bier, that had just expired. And in this state did this holy virgin live for thirty-eight years. It is added, that one day four soldiers entered into her room, and after loading her with injuries, called her a hypocrite and a witch, saying that in time it would be discovered what she was, and took away the poor woollen counterpane which covered her half dead body. Before they left they beat her, and even struck her with their swords.

23. To all these external maladies was added an interior desolation, which afflicted her for several years. When God, for her greater purification, (as he does with those

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who are most pleasing to him) withdrew from her his sensible assistance, she lost her usual loving confidence in him, and the devil fiercely tormented her, telling her that the many evils with which she was afflicted, were a certain sign that God had abandoned her, and that she might die in despair. She nevertheless, although assailed by so many infirmities and interior trials, suffered all with resignation, blessing God for so treating her; and, in order to appease him, put on a girdle of hair cloth, which entered into her wounded flesh.

24. The Saint lived in this state of desolation for four years, but suffered all with resignation to the divine will, and always blessed God for so treating her; she united all her sufferings with those of Jesus Christ in his passion, and in this manner, for the whole of that time, bore up against this terrible tempest. But, after that, God was pleased to console her, and although she continued to suffer, she said: When I look upon Jesus Christ hanging on the cross, I feel no more pain. My sufferings make me cry out, but my heart makes me say: Jesus, my love, increase my pains, but increase my love. To others who pitied her, she said: All my evils are nothing, since I am in the hands of the infinite goodness of God, whose

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bowels of mercy are more tender than those of father or mother.

PRAYER OF A LOVING SOUL IN DESOLATION.

My crucified Jesus, thou knowest that I have left all things for thy love, but after thou hast enabled me to leave all for thee, I find that thou hast forsaken me. But what do I say, O thou the love of my soul? Take compassion on me; it is not I who speak, it is my weakness that makes me thus address thee; I deserve every kind of pain for my many sins. Thou hast left me, as I have deserved, and thou hast deprived me of thy loving assistance, with which thou hast so often consoled me; I nevertheless, however disconsolate and abandoned by thee, protest that I desire always to love and to bless thee. Provided thou dost not deprive me of the grace of loving thee, do with me whatever else thou pleasest. I will say to thee as did that beloved servant of thine: "I love thee, although I may seem an enemy in thy sight; depart from me as much as thou pleasest, I will always follow thee." Lord, deprive me not of thyself, and then deprive me of all things else, as thou pleasest. *Draw me after thee.* My love, draw me nigh to thee, and it will be of no consequence to me if thou deprive me of the consolation of knowing it,

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but draw me forcibly, draw me out of the mire of my sins. *Help thy servants, whom thou hast redeemed with thy precious blood.* I desire to be entirely thine, cost what it will, I desire to love thee with all my powers: but what can I do? Thy precious blood is my hope. Mother of God, my refuge in all tribulations, fail not to pray for me. Through the blood of Jesus, and thy holy prayers, do I firmly hope for salvation. In thee, Blessed Lady, have I hoped, as said St. Bonaventure, and I shall not be confounded for ever. Obtain for me the grace always to love God in this life and for eternity, and I ask for nothing more.

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MEDITATIONS

FOR A

Private Retreat of Eight Days.

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Meditations for a Private Retreat

OF

EIGHT DAYS.

INTRODUCTION.

1. THERE can be no doubt but that retreats made in community, in which meditations and instructions are given by the Clergy, are very profitable; but for persons who desire to advance in divine love, one great means is to go through the same spiritual exercises in private retreats. It is in total solitude that God speaks most efficaciously to the souls of his beloved; and it is impossible for a Christian to make such retreats, and not, each time, come out a different man from what he was when he entered into them. The Saints, in order the more to enjoy God, who in solitude communicates himself more familiarly to those who seek him, retired into caves and deserts. St. Bernard said that he learnt more of divine things amidst the beeches and oaks of the desert, than he ever learnt from masters and from books.

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You may have the same desert, if you will, in your own house; strive to avail yourself of it for at least eight days. But others do not make such retreats. What then? If others do not make them, do you at least make them; and by so doing, you may induce others to follow your example. Such singularities are pleasing to God. No one, says St. Bernard, can become a Saint, if he leads not a singular life in the practice of virtue and in the availing himself of the means of salvation: "That cannot be perfect which is not singular."

2. It is necessary, in order to make these retreats in a proper manner, to relinquish, during the time, all temporal affairs and worldly thoughts; to keep silence as much as possible, and to remain only in the church or in your own house. You may, however, take a walk occasionally for the sake of recreation. For the purpose of such retreats I here add the following meditations, which are not in the way of discourses, but only collections of eternal maxims, of devout sentiments and affections, in order that you may stay on any point from which the soul seems to derive most nourishment, without obliging yourself to read the whole meditation. Sometimes our Lord will enlighten you at the first or second sentiment that you read; if so, stop there, without going farther, in

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order that the mind and heart may find on what to feed. Take care not to enter into these retreats with an anxiety for sensible tenderness and devotion, but solely to learn and to accomplish what God desires of you. With purely this object in view, although you should experience nothing but tediousness and aridity, he will not fail to enlighten you and to inflame you with his holy love: and the greater your fidelity in desolation, the greater will be the divine graces with which your soul will be enriched.

3. As to the distribution of time and the different exercises, you may make use of the following, which every person may adapt to his circumstances.

In the morning.—After rising, meditation for half an hour. The hours, prime, &c. Preparation for communion for half an hour. Communion, after which, an hour's thanksgiving, and during this time hear one or more masses. Work for half an hour. Spiritual reading for half an hour. Particular examination of conscience, and dinner.

During the day.—Vespers and Complin. Second lecture of the Lives of the Saints, for half an hour. Third meditation. Work for half an hour. Visit to the most holy Sacrament and to the Blessed Virgin.

In the evening.—Fourth meditation for half an hour. The noting down of resolu-

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tions. The rosary. Supper. General examination of conscience. The Litany of the Blessed Virgin, and other vocal prayers.

MEDITATION I.

ON THE IMPORTANCE OF SALVATION.

Of all our affairs there is none more important than that of our eternal salvation, on which depends our happiness or misery for eternity.

One thing is necessary. It is not necessary that we should be rich, honoured, or in the enjoyment of good health, but it is necessary that we should be saved. For this end alone has God placed us in the world; and woe to us if we do not attain it!

St. Francis Xavier said, that the only good to be obtained in this world, is salvation; and the only evil to be dreaded, damnation. What matter if we are poor, despised, or infirm? If saved, we shall be happy for ever. On the contrary, what does it avail to be great, or monarchs? If lost, we shall be miserable for eternity.

O God, what will become of me? I may be saved, and I may also be lost. And if I may be lost, why do I not resolve to adhere more closely to thee?

My Jesus, have pity on me. I will amend my life. Give me thy assistance. Thou

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hast died to save me, and shall I notwithstanding forfeit my salvation?

Have we already done enough to secure salvation? Are we already secure of not falling into hell?

'What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?' St. Matt. xvi. 26. If he lose his soul, what shall compensate him for its loss?

What have not the Saints done to secure their salvation? How many kings and queens have renounced their kingdoms and shut themselves up in cloisters! How many young men have left their countries, and have gone to live in deserts! How many young virgins have renounced marriage with the great ones of the world, to go and give their lives for Jesus Christ! And what do we do?

O my God, how much has Jesus Christ done for our salvation! He spent thirty-three years in toil and labour; he gave his blood and his life: and shall we, through our own fault, be lost?

O Lord, I give thee thanks for not having called me out of the world when I had forfeited thy grace. Had I then died, what would have become of me for all eternity?

God desires that all should be saved: 'He will have all men to be saved.' 1 Tim. ii. 4. If we are lost, it will be entirely our

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own fault. And this will be our greatest torment in hell.

St. Teresa says, that even the loss of a trifle, of a vest, of a ring, when it has happened through our own carelessness, occasions us the greatest uneasiness. What a torment then will it be to the damned to have wilfully lost all, their souls, heaven, and God!

Alas! death approaches; and what have I done for life eternal?

O my God, for how many years have I deserved to dwell in hell, where I could not repent, nor love thee! Now, that I can do both, I will repent and will love thee.

And how long shall we delay? Until we weep with the damned, saying: *We therefore have erred?* and there is now no longer, nor will there ever be any remedy for us?

For every other error in this world there is a remedy, but for the loss of the soul there is none.

What pains and trouble do men take to obtain wealth, dignities, or pleasures! But what do they do to save their souls?—Nothing: as though the loss of the soul were but of little consequence.

How much diligence in preserving bodily health! The best physicians, the best remedies, the best climate are sought after: and as regards the health of the soul, what great negligence!

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O my God, I will no longer resist thy calls. Who knows but that the words which I am now reading may be my last call from God?

Can we be sensible of the danger of being lost for ever and not tremble? and do we delay to apply a remedy to the disorders of our consciences?

My soul, how many graces has our Lord bestowed upon thee, that thou mightest be saved! he has caused thee to be born in the bosom of the true Church. How many advantages for becoming a Saint! sermons, confessions, the good example of companions. How many lights, how many loving calls in spiritual exercises, in meditation, in the holy communion! how many mercies has he shown thee! how long has he waited for thee! how many times has he pardoned thee! graces which he has not bestowed on so many others!

'What is there that I ought to do more for my vineyard, that I have not done to it?' Isa. v. 4. What more, says the Almighty, ought I to do for thy soul? For how many years hast thou been in the world, and what fruit hast thou hitherto brought forth?

If we had been allowed to choose the means of salvation, what more easy and effectual means could we have chosen?

Alas, if we do not avail ourselves of so

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many graces, they will serve only to render our death the more miserable!

To become a Saint it is not necessary to have ecstasies and visions; sufficient for you are the ordinary means which you possess. Meditate, communicate frequently, read spiritual books, fly all sinful occasions, and you will become a Saint.

O God, already have I lived many years in the world, and what have I hitherto gained? O Jesus, thy precious blood, thy death upon the cross are my hope.

If this night I were about to die, should I be satisfied with my past life? No; and why do I delay? that death may arrive, and I may lament and say: alas, my life is now at an end, and I have done nothing?

What a grace would it be for a sick man, already despaired of by his physicians, to be allowed another year, or even another month? And God grants me this time; and in what shall I employ it for the future?

O Lord, since thou hast waited for me until now, I will no longer disregard thee. Behold me; tell me what thou requirest of me, and I will do it. I will not wait to give myself to thee until that time when time for me shall be no more.

O Jesus, I will never more offend thee. I will spend the remainder of my life in bewailing my past sins, and in loving thee, the God of my soul.

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Let us proceed quickly, for death is at hand. What we can do to-day let us not put off till to-morrow. To-day passes on and returneth not.

Every one says, at the hour of death: O that I had been a Saint! But of what avail will such regrets be, when the lamp will soon be extinguished for want of oil?

We shall say when death comes: what would it have cost me to have avoided that occasion, to have borne with that person, to have broken off that correspondence, to have yielded that punctilio? But I did not do it; and now what will become of me?

O Lord, help me. I will say to thee with St. Catharine of Genoa: "My Jesus no more sins, no more sins." I renounce all things to please thee.

Let us not think that we can do too much to gain eternal salvation. "No security can be too great," says St. Bernard, "where eternity is at stake."

To secure our salvation, we must be resolved to adopt the means. Inclination will not be sufficient: nor will it serve us to say: I will do it by-and-by. Hell is filled with souls who said by-and-by, by-and-by. Death came in the mean time and they were lost.

The Apostle says: 'With fear and trembling work out your salvation.' Philip. ii. 12. He who trembles at the thought of being

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lost, always recommends himself to God, avoids the occasions of sin, and will be saved.

To be saved we must use violence. Heaven is not given to indolent cowards. 'The violent bear it away.' St. Matt. xi. 12.

O Lord, how many promises have I made thee? but my promises have all been treasons. I will never betray thee more; help me, grant that I may die rather than offend thee.

Ask, saith our Lord, *and you shall receive;* by which he manifests to us his great desire that we should be saved. If any one should say to his friend; ask of me what you please, he could say nothing more. Let us then ever pray to God, and we shall be enriched with graces, and secure of salvation.

My dear Jesus, cast thine eyes on my miseries and have pity on me. I have been forgetful of thee, but thou hast not forgotten me. I love thee, my love, with all my soul; I detest all the offences which I have committed against thee above every evil. Pardon me, my God, and forget my many ingratitudes. And since thou knowest my weakness, do not abandon me; enlighten me, and strengthen me to conquer all things to please thee. Grant that I may forget all, that I may think only of thy love, and the mercies by which thou hast so powerfully obliged me to love thee. Mary, Mother of God, pray to Jesus for me.

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MEDITATION II.

ON THE VANITY OF THE WORLD.

'What doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his own soul.' St. Matt. xvi. 26. O great maxim, which has conducted so many souls to heaven, and bestowed so many Saints on the Church! What doth it profit to gain the whole world, which passes away, and lose the soul, which is eternal?

The world! And what is this world but outside show, a scene which quickly passes away? 'The fashion of this world passeth away.' 1 Cor. vii. 31. Death approaches, the curtain falls, the scene closes, and thus all things come to an end.

Alas! at the hour of death, how will all worldly things appear to a Christian? those vases of silver, those heaps of money, that rich and vain furniture, when he must leave them all forever?

O Jesus, grant that henceforward my soul may be wholly thine; grant that I may love no other but thee. I desire to renounce all things before death tears me away from them.

St. Teresa says: "Nothing ought to be considered of consequence which must have an end." Let us therefore strive to gain that fortune which will not fail with time. What doth it avail a man to be happy for a few

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days (if any thing can be called happiness without God) if he must be unhappy for ever.

David says that earthly goods, at the hour of death, will seem as a dream to one waking from sleep: 'As the dream of them that awake.' Ps. lxxii. 20. What disappointment does he feel who having dreamt that he was a king, on awaking, finds himself still lowly and poor as ever?

O my God, who knows but that this meditation which I am now reading may be the last call for me? Enable me to root out of my heart all terrene affections, before I enter into eternity. Grant that I may be sensible of the great wrong that I have done thee, by offending thee, and by forsaking thee for the love of creatures. *Father, I am not worthy to be called thy son.* I am grieved for having turned my back upon thee, do not reject me, now that I return to thee.

Neither posts of honour, nor pomps, nor riches, nor amusements, nor punctilios, will console a Christian at the hour of death; the love of Jesus Christ, and the little which he has suffered for his love, will alone console him.

Philip II. died, saying: "O that I had been a lay brother in some monastery, and not a king!" Philip III. said: "O that I had lived in a desert! for now I shall appear but with little confidence before the tribunal of God."

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Thus, at the hour of death, do those express themselves who have been esteemed the most fortunate in this world.

In short, all earthly goods acquired during life, at the hour of death, generally end in remorse of conscience and fears of eternal damnation. O God, will the dying sinner say, I have had sufficient light to direct me to withdraw myself from the world, but yet I have followed the world, and the maxims of the world: and now what sentence will be pronounced upon me?

He will say: Fool that I have been! I might have been a Saint with the means and advantages which I enjoyed! I might have led a happy life in union with God: and now what do I find from my past life? But when will he say this? when the scene is about to close, and himself about to enter into eternity, at that moment on which will depend his happiness or misery for ever.

O Lord, have pity on me. For the past I have not been so wise as to love thee. From this day forward thou alone shalt be my only good. *My God and my all.* Thou alone deservest all my love, and thee only will I love.

Ye great ones of the world, who are now tormented in the flames of hell, what remains of your honours and riches? They answer weeping: Nothing, nothing; we have nothing

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but torments and despair. All is passed, but our punishment, which will never end.

They will say: 'What hath pride profited us? or what advantage hath the boasting of riches brought us? All those things are passed away like a shadow.' Wisd. v. 8, 9. Alas! the remembrance of the good things which we have enjoyed in this world will not, at the hour of death, inspire us with confidence, but will fill us with terror and confusion.

Woe to me! how many years have I been in the world, and what have I hitherto done for God? O Lord, have pity on me, and *cast me not away from thy face.*

The time of death is the time of truth: then do all worldly things appear as they really are, vanity, smoke, and dust. O my God, how frequently have I exchanged thee for nothing! I should not dare to hope for pardon, were it not that thou hast died in order to pardon me. Now will I love thee above all things, and will esteem thy grace of greater value than all the kingdoms of the earth. Death is compared by St. Paul to a thief, because it robs us of all things, possession, beauty, dignity, parents, even of our own flesh.

The day of death is called also 'the day of destruction.' Deut. xxxii. 35. Then shall

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we lose all that we have ever acquired, and all that we can hope for from this world.

O my Jesus, I am not concerned about the loss of earthly goods, but only lest I should lose thee, the infinite good.

We extol the Saints, who, for the love of Jesus Christ, despise the goods of this earth; and do we continue to be attached to them at the imminent danger of our salvation?

We have a great esteem for the advantages of this life; and why do we make so little account of the advantages of eternity?

Enlighten me, O my God, and make me sensible that all creatures are nothing, and that thou art my all, the infinite good. Grant that I may leave all things to gain only thee. My God, my God, thee only do I desire, and besides thee nothing.

St. Teresa says, that all our faults and attachments to the goods of this earth, arise from a want of faith. Let us then reanimate our faith, that we shall one day have to leave all and to go into eternity. And hence let us leave all now, while we can obtain merit by so doing, which we shall one day be forced to leave. What are riches, honours, parents? God, God, let us seek only God, and God will be our all.

That eminent servant of God, Sister Margarite of St. Ann, daughter of the emperor Ridolf II., and a discalciated Nun, said:

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"What will kingdoms avail at the hour of death?"

The death of the empress Isabella induced St. Francis Borgia to renounce the world, and to give himself entirely to God; at the sight of her corpse he said: Is it thus then that the grandeurs and the crowns of this word terminate?

O my God, thou hast always loved me! Grant that I may become wholly thine before death overtake me.

O the great secret of death! how does it destroy all worldly desires! how does it expose all worldly grandeur as smoke and deceit! Things the most desired of this earth, lose all their splendour when beheld from the bed of death. The shadow of death obscures the beauty of all things here below.

Of what avail are riches when nothing remains but a winding-sheet? Of what avail is bodily beauty, when all is reduced to a heap of worms? Of what avail is authority, when nothing remains but to be thrown into the grave, and be forgotten by all?

St. Chrysostom says: "Go to a sepulchre, contemplate dust and worms; and sigh." Look on the graves of the dead, see those skeletons gnawed by worms and crumbling into dust, and say with a sigh: "Such must I become, and why do I not think of this? why do I not give myself to God?" Alas!

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who knows but that the sentiments which I am now reading may be the last call for me?

My dear Redeemer, I accept of my death, and I accept of it in whatever way it may please thee to send it to me; but I beseech thee, before thou judgest me, to allow me time to bewail the offences which I have committed against thee. I love thee, O my Jesus, and I am truly sorry for having despised thee.

O God, how many miserable beings, to obtain worldly things, or pleasures, or vanities, have lost their souls, and by losing their souls, have lost all!

Do we or not believe that we must die? and that, only once? And why do we not leave all to secure a happy death? Let us leave all, to secure all.

Is it possible to know that the remembrance of a disorderly life will at the hour of death be an insufferable torment, and still continue to live on in sin?

O my God, I thank thee for the light which thou affordest me. But, O Lord, what have I done? Have I multiplied my sins, and hast thou augmented thy graces? Woe to me, if I do not avail myself of them.

He who reflects that in a short time he must leave the world, will not be attached to it.

O with what peace of soul do those live

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and die, who, despoiled of all things, are contented to say: *My God and my all!*

Solomon said, that all the goods of this earth are only vanity and affliction of spirit; since the more any one possesses of them, the more he suffers.

St. Philip Neri called those fools whose hearts are attached to this world. Fools, because even here they lead miserable lives.

O my God, what now remains of the many offences of which I have been guilty, but the pain and remorse which now torment me, and will torment me still more at the hour of death? O do thou make haste to pardon me. Thou desirest that I should be all thine, and such do I desire to be. Behold, from this moment I give myself to thee, and I desire nothing in return but thyself.

Let us not imagine that to be detached from all, in order to love only God, is to live a disconsolate life. Who on this earth is so contented and happy as the man that loves Jesus Christ with his whole heart? Find me one amongst all the kings of the world, who is more happy than the soul that gives itself wholly to God.

My soul, if now thou wert to depart out of this world, wouldst thou die satisfied with thy past life? And for what dost thou delay? that the light which God in his mercy now affords thee may serve to reproach thee at the great accounting day?

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O Jesus, I renounce all to give myself to thee. Thou didst seek me when I fled from thee; and now that I seek thee, do not reject me. Thou didst love me when I did not love thee, nor even desire that thou shouldst love me: and now that I have no other desire but to love thee, and to be loved by thee, cast me not away from thy face. O my God, I am now convinced that thou desirest to save me, and I desire to work out my salvation to please thee. I leave all, and give my whole self to thee. Mary, Mother of God, pray to Jesus for me.

MEDITATION III.

ON OUR JOURNEY TO ETERNITY.

'We have not here a lasting city, but we seek one that is to come.' Heb. xiii. 14. In this world we are not citizens, but pilgrims; we are on our way to eternity: 'Man shall go into the house of his eternity.' Eccl. xii. 5.

Soon therefore must we be dislodged from this world. The body must soon go down into the grave, and the soul into eternity.

Would not that traveller be guilty of great folly, who should consume all he had in building himself a dwelling, in a place which he must soon leave?

O my God, my soul is eternal; I must then either enjoy thee or lose thee for eternity.

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In eternity there are two places of abode; one overflowing with all delights, the other replete with every torment. And these delights and torments will be eternal. 'If the tree fall to the south, or to the north, in what place soever it shall fall, there shall it be.' Eccl. xi. 3. If the soul go to the place of salvation, it shall be happy there for ever; but if it fall into hell, it shall remain there to weep and lament as long as God shall be God.

There is no medium: either for ever a king in heaven, or for ever a slave of Lucifer: either for ever blessed in heaven, or for ever in despair in hell.

Which of these abodes will fall to the lot of each one of us? that which each one voluntarily chooses. *Man shall go.* He who goes to hell, goes of his own accord. Every one that is damned, is damned because he wills his own damnation.

O my Jesus, would that I had always loved thee! Too late have I known thee, too late have I loved thee, O thou, *the God of my heart, and the God that is my portion for ever!*

Every Christian, in order to live well, ought always to keep eternity before his eyes. O how well regulated is the life of that man who lives and sees all things in the light of eternity!

If heaven, hell, and eternity, were doubt-

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ful things, surely we ought to do all in our power not to run the risk of being lost for ever. But no, they are not doubtful things, but articles of faith.

To what will all the fortunes of this world come? to a funeral, a descent into the grave. Blessed is he who obtains eternal life!

O Jesus, thou art my life, my riches, my love. Grant me a great desire to please thee during the remainder of my life, and give me thy assistance to fulfil it.

One thought of eternity is sufficient to make a Saint. St. Augustin called it the "great thought." It is this thought that has sent so many young persons into cloisters, so many anchorets into deserts, and so many martyrs to cruel deaths.

Father Avila converted a lady who was attached to the world, by only saying: "Consider, *always, for ever.*"

Oh, how much depends on the last moment of our lives! On our last breath depends an eternity, either of happiness or misery; a life of eternal bliss, or of eternal woe. Jesus Christ died upon the cross, in order to secure for us his grace at this last moment.

My dear Redeemer, if then thou hadst not died for me, should I have been lost for ever? I thank thee, O my love, I confide in thee, and love thee.

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Either we believe or we do not believe. If we do not believe, we do too much for things which we consider as fables. But if we do believe, we do too little to obtain a happy eternity, and to avoid eternal misery.

Father Caraffa said, that if men thoroughly knew the truths of eternity, and compared the goods and evils of this life with those of the next, the world would become a desert, because there would be none that would attend to the affairs of this life.

When the last moment of life shall be near at hand, how shall we tremble at the thought, that on that moment will depend our eternal happiness or misery!

O God, months and years pass away; we are approaching to eternity, and we think not of it! And who knows but that this year or month may be my last? who knows but that this may be the last warning I may receive from God?

O my God, I will no longer abuse thy graces. Behold me; make known to me what thou wouldst have me to do, and in all things I will obey thee.

And why should we delay after so many lights and calls from God? unless we desire to lament with the damned, saying: 'The summer is ended, and we are not saved.' Jer. viii. 20. Now is the time for reconciliation with God; after death no remedy will be left us.

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With good reason did Father Avila say, that Christians who believe eternal life, and live at a distance from God, ought to be shut up within an asylum as insane.

The business of eternity is indeed a great point. It is not whether we shall inhabit a house less commodious or lightsome; but whether we shall dwell in a palace of all delights, or in an abyss of the worst of torments.

It is whether we shall be happy with the Saints and Angels, or live in despair with the multitude of the enemies of God. And for how many years? for a thousand? No, for ever, for ever, as long as God shall be God.

If then, O God, I had died in my sins, should I have lost thee for ever? If as yet, O Lord, thou hast not pardoned me, pardon me now, I beseech thee. I love thee with all my soul, and I am sorry above every other evil for having offended thee. I will never lose thee more. I love thee with all my heart, and will for ever love thee. Have pity on me.

Upon many, during life, it makes little impression to hear of judgment, hell, or eternity. But in death, what dread and terror do these truths excite! but alas, with but littte fruit; because then they serve only to increase their remorse and confusion.

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St. Teresa said to her religious: "Daughters, one soul, one eternity;" by which she meant, that if the soul is lost, all is lost, and that the soul once lost is lost for ever.

O Lord, wait yet awhile, that I may weep for my sins. Too many years have I spent to thy displeasure; the time which I have yet to come shall be given all to thee. Accept of me that I may serve thee, my God, my God.

The Lord waits for us; let us highly prize the time which, in his mercy, he bestows upon us, that we may not have to regret it when it shall be no more for us.

O God, what would not a dying man give for another day, or even another hour! but another day or hour, with his sound senses, for the time which remains to the dying is but little adapted to the settling of affairs of conscience. Giddiness of head, pains of body, oppressions at the chest, hinder the mind from doing any thing in a proper manner. Then the soul, as it were, buried in obscurity, is alive to nothing but the distress which overpowers it, and which it cannot alleviate: it would that there were time, but sees that there is no more time for it.

'At what hour you think not, the Son of Man will come.' St. Luke xii. 40. God conceals from us the time of death, that we may always be ready. The time of death is not

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the time to prepare ourselves to give in our accounts, but the time when we should find ourselves prepared to do so. St. Bernard said: "In order to die well we must be ever prepared to die."

O Jesus, too long have I offended thee. It is surely now time that for the future I should prepare for death. I will no longer abuse thy patience. I desire to love thee with all my power. I have very much offended thee, I desire now in like manner to love thee.

Oh what a torment, to repent of our carelessness, when there is no longer time to do what has been left undone!

St. Laurence Justinian says, that worldlings, in death, will willingly give all their riches to obtain but one more hour of life. But it will be said to them: *Time shall be no more.* It will be intimated to them to depart without delay: *Go forth, Christian soul, out of this world.*

St. Gregory relates, that a certain Crisanzius, being at the point of death, cried out to the demons: "Give me time until to-morrow."—But they replied: "Fool! thou hast had it, and why didst thou lose it? now there is no more time for thee."

Ah my God, how many years have I lost! The remainder of my time shall be entirely devoted to thee. Grant that thy holy love

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may abound in me, in whom sin has long abounded.

St. Bernardine of Sienna said, that every moment of time in this life is as precious as God; because in every moment, by an act of love or contrition, we may acquire new degrees of grace.

St. Bernard says, that time is a treasure to be found only in this life. In hell, the lamentation of the damned is: "Oh, if one hour were given us!" Oh, if we had but one hour in which to escape from eternal ruin! In heaven there is no weeping; but if the blessed could weep it would be at the thought of having lost, during their lives, portions of time in which they might have acquired higher degrees of glory.

My beloved Redeemer, I do not deserve thy pity; but thy passion is my hope. Help me, therefore, and stretch out thy hand to a miserable sinner, who now desires to become wholly thine.

And who knows but that a sudden death may surprise us, and deprive us of all time for the making up of our accounts? The many who have died suddenly did not expect so to die; and if they were in sin, what has become of them for all eternity?

The Saints thought that they did but little, in preparing themselves during their whole lives to secure a good end. Father Avila,

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when it was announced to him that he was about to die, said: "Oh that I had but a little more time to prepare myself!"

And we, why do we delay? that we may make a wicked and miserable end, and leave to others an example of the divine justice?

No, my Jesus, I will not oblige thee to abandon me. Tell me what thou requirest of me, and in all things I will do it. Grant that I may love thee, and I ask for nothing more.

'He will call against me the time.' Lam. i. 15. Let us tremble, and let us not so live that God may hereafter, as judge of our ingratitude, call against us the time which, in his mercy, he now bestows upon us. 'Walk,' says our Lord, 'whilst you have the light.' St. John xii. 35. 'The night cometh when no man can work.' St. John ix. 4.

St. Andrew Avellino trembled, saying: and who knows whether I shall be saved or lost? But so saying, he ever united himself the more closely to God. But we, what do we do? How is it possible that he who believes that he must die, and go into eternity, should not give himself wholly to God?

My beloved Redeemer, my crucified love, I will not wait to embrace thee until thou consignest me to death: from this moment I embrace thee, I bind thee to my heart, and leave all to love thee alone, my only good.

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O Mary, my Mother, unite me to Jesus, and obtain for me, that I may never more separate myself from his love.

MEDITATION IV.

ON SIN.

What is mortal sin? According to St. Thomas and St. Augustine, *is a turning away from God:* an act of contempt for his grace and love: and a throwing off of all respect for him before his face, by which the sinner declares: I will not serve thee; I will do as I please, and it matters not to me, if by so doing, I displease thee, and forfeit thy friendship.

To understand how great is the malice of mortal sin, we must first know what God is, and what man is who contemns him. Before God all the Saints and Angels are as nothing; and shall a worm of the earth have the insolence to contemn him?

But what more? man, by committing sin, not only contemns a God of infinite majesty, but a God who has so loved him as to die for the love of him. An eternity, therefore, would not be sufficient to bewail but one mortal sin.

He who commits it, dishonours God by preferring a vapour, a fit of madness, a wretched gratification before him. A God so great! a God so good!

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O Lord, if thou hadst not sacrificed thyself on the cross for the love of me, I should lose all hope of pardon; but thy death gives me confidence. *Into thy hands I commend my spirit.*—I commend to thee my soul, for which thou hast been pleased to shed thy blood and sacrifice thy life; grant that it may love thee, and never more lose thee. I love thee, my Jesus, my love, and my hope. And how shall I ever be able, after having learnt how much thou hast loved me, to separate myself from thee, my only good?

What an affliction is it to us to be injured by one for whom we done much? God is not capable of grief; but could he grieve, he would die of grief and sorrow, at being despised by a creature for whom he has given even his own life.

O my accursed sins, a thousand times do I detest and abhor you: you have caused me to offend my Redeemer who has so much loved me.

Unhappy souls, who are now confined in hell, you who, during life, said that sin was a slight evil, acknowledge now that all your torments are not equal to what you have deserved.

It must be that sin is a great evil, since God, who is mercy itself, is obliged to punish it with an eternal hell. But what more? In order to satisfy divine justice for sin, a God was obliged to sacrifice his own life.

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O God, we know that hell is the most horrible punishment, and have we no fear of sin, which may cast us into hell? We know that God has died, in order that he might be able to pardon our sins, and do we continue to commit sin?

The loss of the least worldly good makes us uneasy and sad; and does the loss of God by sin fail to overwhelm us with affliction and grief for the remainder of our lives?

I give thee thanks, O Lord, for having given me time to bewail my offences against thee. O Jesus, I abhor them with the greatest hatred: give me still greater sorrow, still greater love, that I may lament all my sins, not so much on account of the punishments which I have deserved by them, as for having offended thee, my most amiable God.

What disquiet and fears agitate a courtier who is afraid of having offended his prince? And do we, who know for certain that we have displeased God, and have for a time forfeited his friendship, live tranquil and without being in continual grief?

What care do not men take to avoid poison, which destroys the body? and yet what great negligence in avoiding sin, which is the poison of the soul, and robs us of God!

Let us not be ensnared to commit sin by that fraud of the devil, by which he suggests

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to us that we may afterwards confess it. Oh, how many has the enemy drawn into hell by this stratagem!

O my God, for how many years have I deserved to dwell in hell! Thou hast waited for me, that I may for ever bless thy mercy and love thee. Yes, my Jesus, I bless thee and love thee; and I trust in thy merits that I shall never more be separated from thy love. But if after so many graces I should again offend thee, how shall I be able to presume that thou wilt not abandon me, but again forgive me? Permit it not, O Lord.

God has pity on them that fear him, but not on them that despise him. To offend God because he sheweth mercy, is to provoke him in the highest degree to chastise us.

Again, to offer an outrage to God, because God is forgiving, is to deride him; but *God is not mocked.*

The devil will say to you: "But who knows? even with this sin it may be that you may still be saved." But meanwhile, if you sin, you yourself may condemn yourself to hell. Who knows? it may be that as yet you may be saved; but it may also be, and that more easily, that you may be lost. And is the affair of eternal salvation to be risked on a *who knows?* If in the mean time death should come upon you! if God should abandon you! what will become of you?

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No, my God, I will never more offend thee. How many are now suffering in hell for lesser sins than mine! I will no longer be devoted to self, but will be thine and entirely thine.—To thee I consecrate my whole liberty and will. *I am thine, do thou save me.* Save me from hell, but first save me from sin. I love thee, my Jesus, I will never more forsake thee.

The holy Fathers say, that God has determined the number of sins which he will forgive each one. Hence, as we know not this number, we ought to fear lest at every additional sin God should abandon us. This fear—*Who knows, whether God will any more pardon me?*—ought to be a great restraint upon us to keep us from again offending God: with this fear we should be secure.

And he who has been the more favoured by God with his lights and graces, ought to be the more afraid of being abandoned by him.

The Angelic Doctor says, that the grievousness of sin increases in proportion to the ingratitude with which sin is committed. Woe then to the Christian who, after having been enriched with the graces of God, offends him mortally.

O my Jesus, while thou hast shown me numberless mercies, I have repaid them by multiplied offences! Thou hast bestowed

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favours upon me, and I, in return, have despised thee! But now I love thee with my whole heart, and I desire to make amends by my love for all the offences which I have committed against thee. O do thou enlighten and strengthen me.

"Sin," said Sister Mary Strozzi, "in a religious person, strikes heaven with horror, and obliges God to turn himself away."

He who has not a great dread of mortal sin, is not far from falling into it. Hence it is necessary to fly from dangerous occasions as much as possible.

It is necessary also to fly from all deliberate venial sins. Father Alvarez said: "Little negligences, but voluntary, do not kill the soul, but they weaken it; so that, on occasion of a grievous temptation, it will not have strength to resist, and will fall."

St. Teresa has left written: "From known sin, however small it be, may God deliver us." Because, said the Saint, a deliberate venial sin does us more harm than all the devils in hell can do.

No, my Jesus, no, I will no more offend thee, neither in great nor in small things. Thou hast done too much to oblige me to love thee. I desire rather to die than to give thee the least offence. Thou hast not deserved it; but hast deserved all my love, and I desire to love thee with all my strength. Give me thy assistance.

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Unhappily, venial sins are considered as slight evils: but how can that be called a slight evil which is an offence against God?

He who commits venial sins without restraint says: I may do this and still be saved. But I say: by continuing such a course, you will not be saved; for, says St. Gregory: "The soul never remains where it falls, but always descends lower." St. Isidore writes, that he who makes no account of venial sins, is permitted by Almighty God to fall into mortal sins, in punishment of his want of love. And our Lord himself said to the Blessed Susone, that those who make no account of venial sins, expose themselves to much greater danger than they are aware of; because, it thus becomes much more difficult for them to persevere in grace.

The Council of Trent teaches, that we cannot persevere in grace without the special assistance of God, but he is too undeserving of such special assistance, who offends God by voluntary venial sins, without any thought of amendment.

Chastise me not, O Lord, as I have deserved. Remember not the many offences which I have committed against thee, and deprive me not of thy light and assistance. I desire to amend, I desire to be thine. O omnipotent God, accept of me and change me. This is my hope.

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Our Lord said to Blessed Angela de Foligno, "Those who are enlightened by me to aim at perfection, but, debasing their souls, walk in the ordinary way, will be abandoned by me."

He who serves God, but is not afraid of offending him by venial indulgences, would seem to think that God is not worthy of being served with greater attention. He declares, in fact, that God is not deserving of so much love as to oblige us to prefer his pleasure to our own satisfaction.

Habitual defects, says St. Augustin, are a kind of leprosy, which renders the soul so disgusting as to deprive her of God's embraces.

I am sensible, O Lord, that thou hast not as yet abandoned me, as I have deserved; strengthen me, therefore, to shake off tepidity. I desire never more deliberately to offend thee. I desire to love thee with my whole soul. O Jesus, help me, in thee do I confide.

St. Francis says, that it is the devil's art to bind souls first with a hair, that he may afterwards bind them with a chain, and enslave them. Let us therefore be on our guard not to be entangled by any of the passions. A soul that is entangled by passion, is either lost, or in great danger of being lost.

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"The devil," said Mary Victoria Strada, "when he cannot have much, is content with little, but by that little he gains much."

Our Lord declares that the lukewarm are loathsome and disgusting to him: 'Because thou art lukewarm.....I will begin to vomit thee out of my mouth.' Apoc. iii. 16. This means abandonment on the part of God.

Tepidity is an hectic fever, which is scarcely perceived, but if neglected becomes fatal; inasmuch as tepidity renders tne soul insensible to remorse of conscience.

O Jesus, do not cast me off, as I have deserved; look not on my ingratitude, but on the sufferings which thou hast endured for my sake. I am sorry for all my offences against thee. I love thee, O my God; and from this day forward I desire to do my utmost to please thee. O, love of my soul, I have very much offended thee; grant that for the remainder of my life I may very much love thee. O Mary, my hope, help me by thy holy intercession.

MEDITATION V.

ON DEATH.

We must die. Sooner or later we must die.

In every age, houses and cities are filled with new inhabitants, and their predecessors consigned to the grave.

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We are born but to die. However long our life may be, a day, an hour will come which will be our last, and this hour is already determined.

I thank thee, O God, for the patience with which thou hast borne me. O that I had died rather than have ever offended thee! But since thou givest me time to repair what is past, make known to me what thou requirest of me, and I will obey thee in all things.

In a few years, neither I who write, nor thou that readest, will be living on this earth. As we have heard the bell toll for others, so will others one day hear it toll for us. As we now read the names of others inscribed in the lists of the dead, so will others read ours.

In a word, there is no alternative; we must die. And what is more terrible, we can die but once: and if once lost, we shall be lost for ever.

What will be your alarm when it shall be announced to you that you must receive the last sacraments, and that there is no time to be lost! Then will you see your relatives and friends leave your room, and none remain but your confessor, and the servants to attend you.

O Jesus, I will not wait until death to give myself to thee. Thou hast said, that thou

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knowest not how to reject the soul that seeks thee: *Seek and you shall find.* Now, therefore, do I seek thee; grant that I may find thee. I love thee, O infinite goodness; thee alone do I desire, and besides thee, nothing.

In the midst of his schemes and intrigues the man of the world shall hear it said to him: "Christian Brother, you are fatally ill, and must prepare to die." He would put his accounts in order; but alas! the terror and confusion which agitate him, render him incapable of doing any thing.

Whatever he sees or hears adds to his fears and distress. All worldly things become to him as thorns; the remembrance of past pleasures, punctilios of honour, vanities, ostentation, friends who have withdrawn him from God, vain apparel, and all such things, alarm and torment him.

What will be his terror when he reflects: "In a short time I shall be no more; and I know not whether I shall be happy, or miserable, for eternity!" O God, what consternation will the bare words, judgment, hell, eternity, strike into the souls of poor dying worldlings.

My Redeemer, I believe that thou hast died for me. From thy precious blood do I hope for salvation. I love thee, O infinite goodness, and I am grieved for having offended thee. O Jesus, my hope, my love, have pity on me.

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Imagine to yourself a man seized with his last illness. He who but a little while ago went about slandering, threatening, and ridiculing others, is suddenly paralysed, and deprived of his strength and bodily senses, so that he can neither speak, nor see, nor hear.

Alas! the unhappy man thinks now no more of his engagements, or his schemes of vanity; the thought of the account which he must soon render to God alone occupies his mind. His relatives, weeping, sighing, or in sad silence surround him, and his confessor tries to assist him.

Physicians consult together and increase his alarm. In such a state he thinks no longer of his amusements; he thinks only of the news which is brought him, that his malady is mortal.

But there is no remedy; in this state of confusion, in this tempest of pain, affliction and fear, he must prepare himself to depart out of this world. But how is he to prepare himself in so short a time! His mind is almost gone. But there is no remedy, he must depart. What is done is done.

O God, what will my death be? No, I desire not to die in such great uncertainty as to my salvation. I will change my life. O Jesus, help me, for I am resolved to love thee henceforward, with my whole heart. Unite me to thyself, and never suffer me to be separated from thee.

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If you were about to die, what would you not give for another year, or another month? Resolve therefore to do now what you will not be able to do at the hour of death.

Who knows but that this year, or this month, or even this day, may be your last?

You would not wish to die in the state in which you now are; and will you dare to continue to live on in the same state? You lament over those who die suddenly, because they have no time to prepare themselves for death; and have you time, and will not prepare yourself?

O my God, I will not oblige thee to forget me. I thank thee for the mercies which thou hast bestowed upon me: assist me in my endeavours to change my life. I see that thou desirest to save me; and I desire to be saved that I may praise and love thee for all eternity.

At the approach of death the crucifix will be presented to you, and you will be admonished that Jesus Christ must be your only refuge and consolation.

To those who have had but little love for the crucifix, it will be a subject of fear rather than of encouragement. On the contrary, what a consolation will it be to those who have left all for the love of their crucified Jesus!

My beloved Jesus, thou shalt be my only love in life and in death: *My God and my all.*

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How are the dying, whose consciences reproach them, filled with terror at the sole mention of eternity! Hence they will not hear anything else spoken of but their malady, physicians and remedies; and if the affairs of their souls be mentioned, they soon grow tired, change the subject, and beg of you to let them rest.

The sinner will exclaim: "Oh that I had time to amend my life!" But it will be said to him: *Depart out of this world.* "Call in additional medical aid," will he answer; "try other remedies." But of what avail will these be? his hour is come, he must depart and go into eternity.

To him who loves God how consoling will it be to hear it said, *Depart.* He will not be terrified, but rejoice at the thought of being soon out of all danger of losing his sovereign and beloved good.

Let thy place be this day in peace and thy abode in holy Sion. What a joyful announcement to him who dies in a well-grounded confidence of being in the grace of God!

O Jesus, in thy precious blood do I place my hope, that thou wilt conduct me into that place of peace, where I shall be able to say: My beloved God, I have now no longer any fear of losing thee.

Have compassion, O Lord, on his sighs:

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have compassion on his tears. My God, I will not wait until death to bewail my offences against thee; I now detest and abhor them, and am sorry for them with my whole heart, and would willingly die of sorrow for having committed them. I love thee, O infinite goodness. I desire to live and to die in sorrow and in love.

Remember, O Lord, he is thy creature; not made by strange gods, but by thee, the only living and true God. O my God, thou who hast created me for thyself, cast me not away from thy face. If I have despised thee, I now love thee more than myself, and I desire to love only thee.

He who has had but little love for Jesus Christ will tremble at the appearance of the holy Viaticum: but he, on the contrary, who has loved only Jesus, will be filled with confidence and love, when he shall behold his Lord at hand to accompany him in his passage to eternity.

When Extreme Unction shall be received, the devil will remind the dying man of all the sins committed by means of the senses. Let us therefore be careful to bewail them before the approach of death.

When he shall have received all the sacraments, his relatives and friends will retire, and he will be left alone with the crucifix.

O Jesus, when all shall have abandoned

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me, do not thou depart from me. *In thee, O Lord, have I hoped, let me never be confounded.*

A cold sweat spreads itself over him, his eyes become dim, his pulse intermit, his extremities become cold, he stretches himself out like a corpse, and his agony commences. Alas! he is already rapidly passing away into eternity.

His breath fails him, his respirations become much less frequent, and death is near at hand. The priest lights a blest candle and places it in his hand, and begins to repeat for him acts suitable for the soul's immediate departure. O light, enlighten now our souls, for then thou wilt be of but little service to us when the time shall be gone for repairing the evil which we have done.

O God, how will our offences and the vanities of this world appear by this last light?

The dying man expires: and in the same moment in which he breathes his last, time for him concludes and eternity commences. O moment, which will decide our happiness or misery for eternity!

O Jesus, have mercy; pardon me and unite me to thee, that I may not at my last moment be lost for ever.

The soul being departed, the priest says to the bystanders: he is gone.——Is he dead? Yes, he is dead.—May he rest in peace. He

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rests in peace if he has died in peace with God; but if not, he will never enjoy peace so long as God shall be God.

As soon as he is dead, the news spreads abroad. One says: He was a man of address, but not very devout. Another: Who knows whether he is lost? His relations and friends, to save their feelings, will not hear him spoken of, and say to those who allude to him: "For pity, do not mention him?"

Thus, he who was the life of conversation becomes the horror of all. Go into his house, he is no longer there; his room, his bed, his furniture are divided amongst others: and he, where is he? his body is in the grave, his soul in eternity.

If you would see him, open that grave; he is no longer blooming and feasting, but a heap of corruption, in which are engendered multitudes of worms, which will soon eat away the lips and the cheeks, so that in a little while nothing more will remain of him but a fetid skeleton, which, in time, will fall to pieces, the head from the trunk, and the bones from one another.

See then to what this body of ours will one day be reduced, on account of which we so often offend God!

O Saints of God, you remembered this, and kept your bodies in subjecton by mortification; now are your bones venerated upon

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altars, and your souls are enjoying the sight of God, waiting for the day of final retribution, when your bodies will become your companions in glory, as they were formerly your companions in suffering.

Were I now in eternity what should I not wish to have done for God? St. Camillus de Lellis, looking on the graves of the dead, was accustomed to say: "O if these were alive, what would they not now do for eternal life? And I who am alive, what do I do?"

O Lord, do not condemn me with the reprobate on account of my ingratitude. Others have offended thee in the midst of darkness and ignorance, but I have offended thee in the midst of light. Thou hast more than sufficiently enlightened me to know the wrong which I did in committing sin; and yet, I closed my eyes to thy lights, trampled on thy graces, and turned my back upon thee. *O thou who art my hope, be not to me a subject of dread, in the day of affliction.*

ON THE DEATH OF THE JUST.

St. Bernard says that the death of the just is called precious, because it is the end of labour and the gate of life. To the Saints death is a reward, because it is the end of sufferings, pains, struggles, and the fear of losing God.

That *depart*, which is such a terror to

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worldlings, alarms not the just; because to them it is not painful to leave all worldly goods, for God has been their only riches: nor honours, for they have despised them: nor relations, for they have loved them only in God. Hence, as they frequently repeated in life, so now with redoubled joy do they exclaim in death: *My God and my all.*

Nor do the pains of death afflict them; they rejoice in offering to God the last remnants of life in testimony of their love for him, uniting the sacrifice of their lives with the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross, for the love of them.

O what a consolation for the Saints is the thought that now the time is over, when they might have offended God, and were in constant danger of losing him. O what joy to be able then to embrace the crucifix, and to say: *In peace, in the self same, I will sleep and I will rest!*

The devil will endeavour at that time to disquiet us by the sight of our sins: but if we have bewailed them, and have loved Jesus Christ with our whole hearts, Jesus will console us. God is more desirous of our salvation than the devil is for our perdition.

Moreover, death is the gate of life. God is faithful, and will indeed at that time console those who have loved him. Even in the sorrows of death he will bestow upon

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them foretastes of heaven. Their acts of confidence, of love of God, of desire soon to behold him, will commence for them that peace which they will enjoy throughout eternity. What joy, in particular, will the holy Viaticum afford to those who can say with St. Philip Neri: "Behold my love, behold my love."

We ought therefore not to fear death, but sin, which alone makes death so terrible. A great servant of God (Father Colombière) said: "It is morally impossible for one who in life has been faithful to God to die unhappily."

He who loves God, is desirous of death, which will unite him eternally to God. It is a sign of but little love for God, not to desire soon to behold him.

Let us accept of the hour of death with the loss of worldly things. We may do this now meritoriously, but then, it must be done forcibly and with danger of being lost. Let us live as though every day were to be the last of our lives. O how well does he live who lives always with the remembrance of death present to his mind!

O my God, when will the day arrive, in which I shall see thee and love thee face to face? I do not deserve it; but thy wounds, O my Redeemer, are my hope. I will say to thee, with St. Bernard: *Thy wounds are my*

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merits. And hence I will take confidence, and will also say to thee with St. Augustin: *Would that I may die, O Lord, that I may behold thee!* O Mary, Mother, in the blood of Jesus Christ, and in thy holy intercession do I hope for salvation, and to come to praise thee, thank thee, and love thee for ever in heaven.

MEDITATION VI.

ON JUDGMENT.

Place yourself, in imagination, in the same situation in which you will be when dying and in your agony, when not more than an hour or less will remain for you. Imagine that in a very short time you will have to be presented before your Judge, Jesus Christ, to render an account of your whole life. Nothing will then so much alarm you as remorse of conscience. Put, therefore, your accounts in order, before the arrival of the great accounting day

When you are on the point of entering into eternity, how will remorse for past sins, diffidence, increased by the suggestions of the devil, and uncertainty as to our future lot, cast us into a tempest of confusion and fear! Let us therefore now unite ourselves to Jesus Christ, and to Mary, that at that critical moment they may not abandon us.

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How terrified shall we be at the thought, that in a few moments we shall be judged by Jesus Christ! St. Mary Magdalen of Pazzi, being ill, and being asked by her director why she trembled, answered: "How terrible is the thought of being obliged to appear before Christ as our Judge."

O Jesus, remember that I am one of those whom thou hast redeemed with thy blood. *We beseech thee, therefore, help thy servants whom thou hast redeemed with thy precious blood.*

It is a common opinion among divines, that in the same place and moment in which the soul departs, it is judged by Jesus Christ. So that in that same moment the trial is gone through, and the sentence passed and put in execution.

O fatal moment, in which is decided the happy or miserable lot of each one for eternity.

The Ven. Father da Ponte, when he thought of judgment, trembled to such a degree as to shake the room in which he was.

O Jesus, if now thou wert to judge me, what would become of me? Eternal Father, *Look upon the face of thy Christ.* I sincerely repent of all the sins that I have committed against thee: look on the blood, the wounds of thy Son, and have pity on me.

The soul goes forth and leaves the body,

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but it is some time doubtful whether the person is alive or dead. While the bystanders are doubting, the soul enters into eternity. The priest, satisfied at length that the man is dead, sprinkles the corpse with holy water and repeats the prayer of the Church: "Come to his assistance all ye Saints of God; meet him ye Angels of the Lord." But if the soul be lost, the Saints and Angels can no longer assist it.

Jesus will come to judge us, appearing with the same wounds which he received for us in his passion. These wounds will be a source of great consolation to penitents, who with true sorrow have bewailed their sins during life, but will be a source of great terror to sinners who have died in their sins.

O God, how painful will it be for the soul to behold him for the first time as her indignant Judge! It will be more painful than hell itself.

The soul will then behold the majesty of the Judge: she will see how much he has suffered for the love of her: she will see the many mercies which he has exercised towards her, the many and great means which he has afforded her of gaining salvation: she will see the vanity of all worldly things and the greatness of those which are eternal: she will see, in a word, all these truths, but without any advantage. Then will there

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be no more time to repair past errors. What is done, is done.

My beloved Redeemer, grant that when I first behold thee, I may see thee with an appeased countenance; and for this end, give me now light, give me strength to reform my life. I desire always to love thee. If hitherto I have despised thy graces, I now esteem them above all the kingdoms of the world.

What great consolation will he enjoy at the hour in which he is to be judged, who, for the love of Jesus Christ, has been detached from all worldly things, who has loved contempt, and mortified the body, who, in a word, has loved nothing but God!

What joy will he experience in hearing it said to him: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord. Be glad and rejoice, for now thou art saved, and there is no longer any fear of thy being lost."

On the contrary, the soul which leaves this life in a state of sin, before Jesus condemns it, will condemn itself, and will declare itself deserving of hell.

O Mary, my powerful advocate, pray to Jesus for me. Help me now that thou art able to help me. Then thou wouldst behold me perish and wouldst not be able to assist me.

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'What things a man shall sow, those also shall he reap.' Gal. vi. 8. Let us examine what things we have hitherto sown. And let us do now what we shall then wish to have done.

If now, within an hour, we had to appear for judgment, how much should we be willing to give to purchase another year? And in what shall we spend the years which remain for us?

The abbot Agato, after many years of penance, when he thought of judgment, said: "What will become of me when I shall be judged?" And holy Job exclaimed: 'What shall I do when God shall rise to judge? and when he shall examine, what shall I answer him?' xxxi. 14. And what shall we answer, when Jesus Christ shall call us to account for the graces which he has bestowed upon us, and for the bad use which we have made of them?

O God, 'deliver not up to beasts the souls that confess to thee.' Ps. lxxiii. 19. I do not deserve pardon, but thou wouldst not have me lose confidence in thy mercy. Save me, O Lord, raise me up from the mire of my miseries. I desire to amend my life, do thou assist me.

The cause to be decided at the hour of death will be one which will involve our eternal happiness or misery. Hence we

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should be most careful in using our utmost endeavours to secure a favourable issue. Each one, considering this, should say to himself: So it is. Why therefore do I not leave all things to give myself entirely to God? 'Seek ye the Lord, while he may be found.' Isa. lv. 6. He who at his judgment after death loses God, will never again find him; but, in life, he who seeks him finds him. O Jesus, if hitherto I have despised thy love, I now seek for nothing but to love thee and to be loved by thee. Grant that I may find thee, O thou the God of my soul.

O the folly of worldlings! I look forward to your appearance in the valley of Josaphet. There you shall change your sentiments, there shall you bewail your folly, but to no purpose.

And you, who are afflicted in this world, be of good heart, be of good heart. On that last day all your pains shall be changed into the delights and enjoyments of paradise: *Your sorrow shall be turned into joy.*

What a glorious appearance will the Saints then make who in this world were so much despised! And what a horrible appearance will so many nobles, kings and princes make, who will then be condemned!

My crucified and despised Jesus, I embrace thy cross. What is the world, what are pleasures, what are honours! O my God,

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thee only do I desire, and besides thee, nothing.

What horror will the reprobate in that day experience at being separated from Jesus Christ by that terrible sentence, publicly pronounced: *Depart from me, ye cursed!* O, my Jesus, I also at one time deserved such a sentence! But now I hope that thou hast pardoned me. O, do not suffer me to be any more separated from thee. I love thee, and hope to love thee for ever.

What joy, on the other hand, will the elect experience, when they shall hear themselves invited by Jesus Christ to partake of the bliss of heaven in those sweet words: *Come, ye blessed!* My beloved Redeemer, I hope in thy precious blood that I also shall be numbered with these happy souls, and embracing thy feet shall love thee for all eternity.

Let us reanimate our faith, and reflect that one day we shall meet in that valley, and be placed either on the right hand with the elect, or on the left with the reprobate. Let us cast ourselves at the feet of the crucifix, and turn our attention to the state of our souls; and if we find them unprepared to appear before Jesus Christ, let us correct and amend them now whilst we have time. Let us detach ourselves from every thing which is not God, and unite ourselves to Jesus Christ, as much as we are able, by

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meditation, the holy communion, mortification of the senses, and, above all, by prayer. The making use of these means which God affords us for our salvation, will be a great sign of our predestination.

O my Jesus and my Judge, I do not desire to lose thee, but to love thee for ever. I love thee, my love, I love thee; and thus I hope to be able to address thee when I shall first behold thee as my Judge. I now say to thee: Lord, if thou desirest to chastise me, as I have deserved, chastise me, but do not deprive me of thy love; grant that I may always love thee, and may be always loved by thee, and then do with me what thou wilt.

MEDITATION VII.

ON THE REMORSE OF CONDEMNED CHRISTIANS IN HELL.

The greatest torment which the damned will have to endure in hell, will be, themselves ever preying on themselves by remorse: 'Their worm dieth not.' St. Mark ix. 47. Alas, what a cruel worm will it be to Christians who are lost, to think for how very little they have condemned themselves. Have we then, will they say, for such trifling, transitory and poisonous gratifications, lost heaven and God, and condemned ourselves to this prison of torments for ever!

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We had the happiness of being of the true faith; but forsaking God, we led miserable lives, to be succeeded by others still more miserable in this pool of fire! God favoured us with so many lights, so many means of salvation, and we miserably chose to damn ourselves.

O my Jesus, thus should I now have been bewailing my misery in hell, if thou hadst caused me to die when I was in sin. I thank thee for the mercies which thou hast shown me, and detest all the sins that I have committed against thee. Had I been in hell, I could no longer have loved thee; but since I can still love thee, I desire to love thee with all my heart. I love thee, my God, my love, my all.

At present what does our past life appear, but as a dream, a moment? But what will a life of forty or fifty years appear to the damned, when, after hundreds and thousands of millions of years shall have passed away, they shall find that their eternity is still to come?

What will those miserable pleasures for which they have sacrificed their salvation, appear to them? They will say: "Have we then for these accursed gratifications, which were scarcely tasted before they were ended, condemned ourselves to burn for ever in this furnace of fire, abandoned by all, for all eternity?"

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Another subject of remorse will be the thought of the little which they were required to do in order to be saved. They will say: "Had we pardoned those injuries, had we overcome those human respects, had we avoided those occasions, we should not have been lost."

What would it have cost us to avoid those conversations? to deprive ourselves of those accursed gratifications? to yield that punctilio? Whatever they would have cost us, we ought to have been willing to do every thing to obtain salvation: but we did not do so, and now there is no remedy for our eternal ruin.

Had we frequented the sacraments, had we not neglected meditation, had we recommended ourselves to God, we should not have fallen into sin. We frequently proposed to do this, but we did it not: we sometimes commenced a good course, but we soon discontinued it: hence we are lost.

O God of my soul, how many times have I promised to love thee, and again turned my back upon thee? O by that love with which thou didst die for me on the cross, grant me sorrow for my sins, grant me to love thee, and grace ever to have recourse to thee in the time of temptation.

What cruel swords will the lights, the calls, and all the other graces of God be to

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the damned! of these they will say: "We might have been Saints, and happy for ever in heaven; but now we must be for ever miserable!"

The greatest torment of the damned will be to reflect that they are lost wilfully, through their own fault, notwithstanding Jesus Christ died to save them. "God," will they say, "gave his life for our salvation, and we fools, wilfully cast ourselves into this furnace of fire to burn for ever! Heaven lost! God lost! ourselves eternally miserable!" Such will be the eternal lamentations of the damned.

O my God, despised and forsaken by me, grant that I may now find thee whilst time yet remains for me. For this end, grant me, O my Redeemer, to share in that sorrow which overwhelmed thee in the garden of Gethsemani for my sins. I am sorry above every evil for having offended thee. Receive me into thy favour, O Jesus, now that I promise to love thee, and to love no other but thee.

Represent to yourself a sick man, in great pain and suffering, who has none to pity him, but many to load him with injuries, to reproach him with his disorders, and to scorn him with great bitterness. The damned are treated much worse. They suffer all kinds of torments, without the slightest compassion from any one.

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But, at least, cannot the damned love God who justly punishes them? Ah no, while they know that he is sovereignly amiable, they are constrained to hate him. This is hell, not to be able to love the sovereign good, which is God.

If the damned could resign themselves to the divine will, as pious souls in their sufferings are now able to do, hell would no longer be hell. But no; the damned shall rage like wild beasts under the scourge of divine justice, and their rage shall serve but to increase their torments.

If then, O Jesus, I were in hell, should I be incapable of loving thee and hate thee for ever? And what evil hast thou done me, for which I should hate thee? Thou hast created me, thou hast died for me; thou hast bestowed upon me many special graces: these are the evil which thou hast done me. Chastise me as thou pleasest, but do not deprive me of the power of loving thee. I love thee, my Jesus, and I desire ever to love thee.

Think of the horror of a soul on its first entrance into hell. "Am I then," will it say, "really damned? or am I mistaken?" It will think whether there can be any remedy, but will find that there can be none for all eternity.

Millions of ages shall pass away, as many

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as there are drops of water in the sea; or grains of sand on the earth, or leaves upon the trees; and hell shall still be hell, eternity shall be still to come.

At least will not the damned be able to flatter themselves saying: "Who knows but that hell may one day have an end?" No, for there can be no *who knows* in hell. The damned will be most certain that all the torments which they will suffer every moment, will continue throughout all eternity. O God, is hell believed, and are there any that commit sin?

Greater will be the torment of those who have often meditated on hell, and yet by sin have consigned themselves to its torments. Ah! let us not lose time, let us renounce all and unite ourselves to Jesus Christ. All that we can do to avoid hell will be but little. And let us tremble; he that trembles not, will not be saved.

O my Jesus, thy precious blood, thy death are my hope. All others may abandon me, but do not thou abandon me. I see that thou hast not as yet abandoned me, since thou still invitest me to pardon, if I will but repent of my sins, and still offerest me thy grace and thy love, if I will but love thee. Yes, my Jesus, my life, my treasure, my love, I will ever bewail my offences against thee, and will ever love thee with my whole heart.

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My God, if I have lost thee, I will lose thee no more. Tell me what thou requirest of me, and I will endeavour to comply with thy will in all things; grant that I may live and die in thy grace, and then dispose of me as thou pleasest. O Mary, my hope, be thou my protectress, and suffer me not any more to lose God.

MEDITATION VIII.

ON LOVE FOR JESUS CHRIST CRUCIFIED.

O my Jesus, what greater proof of thy love couldst thou have given me, than the sacrificing of thy life upon the disgraceful gibbet of the cross, to make satisfaction for my sins, and to conduct me with thee into paradise.

'He humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross.' Phil. ii. 8. The Son of God therefore, for the love of man, obedient to his Eternal Father, whose will it was that he should die for our salvation, humbled himself to die, and to die on a cross! and are there those to be found who believe this and love not such a God?

O Jesus, how much has it cost thee to make me understand that thou ardently lovest me; and I have basely repaid thee with ingratitude. O accept of me now and suffer me to love thee, since now I will no

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more abuse thy love. I love thee, my sovereign good, and desire to love thee for ever. Remind me continually of the pains which thou sufferedst for me, that I may never forget to love thee.

O God, the passion of Jesus Christ is spoken of, and is listened to as though it were a fable, or the sufferings of some one unknown to us, and not at all belonging to us.

O ye sons of men, why do ye not love Jesus Christ? Tell me, what more could our blessed Redeemer have done to make us love him, than to die in the midst of grief and torments?

If the vilest of mankind had suffered for us the torments which Jesus Christ has suffered, could we help giving him our affection and showing him our gratitude?

But, my Jesus, why do I speak of others and not rather of myself? What has hitherto been my gratitude towards thee? Alas, I have repaid thy love only with offences against thee!

Pardon me; for, from this day, I desire to love thee, and to love thee much. I should be too ungrateful, if after so many favours and mercies I loved thee but little.

Let us reflect that this man of sorrows, nailed to the disgraceful wood of the cross, is our true God, and suffers and dies there for no other motive but love for us.

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Do we then believe that Jesus Christ crucified is our God, and really dies for us, and can we love any thing but him?

O beautiful flames of love which consumed the life of my Saviour on Calvary, come and consume in me all worldly affections; cause me ever to burn with love for such a God, who was pleased to die and to sacrifice his whole self for the love of me.

What a spectacle, for the angels of heaven to behold the divine Word fastened to a gibbet, and dying for the salvation of us his miserable creatures!

O my Saviour, thou hast not refused me thy blood and thy life, and shall I refuse thee my affections? Shall I refuse thee any thing that thou askest of me? No; thou hast given thy whole self to me, and I will give my whole self without reserve to thee.

My soul, behold on Calvary thy God crucified and dying, see how much he suffers, and say to him: why, O Jesus, why dost thou so much love me, why art thou so much afflicted and tormented on the cross? O, thou wouldst be less afflicted if thou didst love me less.

Ah, my dear Redeemer, what a multitude of sorrows, ignominies and internal afflictions torment thee upon the cross! thy most sacred body hangs from three nails, and bears only on thy wounds; the people who surround thee deride and blaspheme thee; and

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thy immaculate soul is internally much more afflicted than thy body. Tell me, why dost thou suffer so much? Thou answerest me: I suffer all for the love of thee; remember then the affection which I have borne thee, and love me.

Yes, my Jesus, I will love thee. And whom shall I love, if not God who dies for me? Hitherto I have despised thee, but now my greatest grief is the remembrance of my offences against thee, and I desire nothing but to be entirely thine. O my Jesus, pardon me, and draw my heart to thee: pierce and inflame it thoroughly with thy love.

Let us consider how loving were the sentiments of Jesus Christ, with which he presented his hands and feet to be nailed to the cross, offering at the same time his divine life to his Eternal Father for our salvation. My beloved Saviour, when I think how much my soul hast cost thee, I cannot despair of pardon. However great and numerous my sins, I will not despair of being saved, since thou hast already superabundantly satisfied for me. My Jesus, my hope, and my love, as much as I have offended thee, so much will I love thee: I have exceedingly offended thee, I desire also exceedingly to love thee; thou who givest me this desire, help me.

Eternal Father, *look on the face of thy Christ.* Behold thy dying Son upon the cross;

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look on that livid countenance, that head crowned with thorns, those hands pierced with nails, that body all bruised and wounded; behold the victim sacrificed for me, and which I now present to thee; have pity on me.

'He hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood.' Apoc. i. 5. Why should we fear that our sins will hinder us from becoming Saints, when Jesus Christ has instituted a bath of his own blood, to wash our souls from them? It is sufficient that we repent of them and desire to amend.

Jesus, on the cross, had us in his thoughts, and from thence prepared for us all those graces and mercies which he now bestows upon us, with as much love as though he had had to save only the soul of each one in particular.

O my Saviour, thou didst foresee upon the cross the offences which I should commit against thee, and instead of punishments thou didst prepare for me lights, loving calls, and pardon. O my Jesus, shall I ever again, after so many graces, offend thee and separate myself from thee? O my Lord, permit it not. Grant that I may die rather than not love thee. I will say to thee with St. Francis of Sales: "Either to die, or to love; either to love, or to die."

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COMPENDIUM

OF

Rules for a Christian Life.

17

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COMPENDIUM

OF

Rules for a Christian Life.

I. Rising in the morning make the following acts: 1. "O my God, I adore thee, I love thee with my whole heart, and thank thee for all thy benefits, particularly for having preserved me this night." 2. "I offer to thee all that I shall do or suffer throughout the day, in union with the actions and sufferings of Jesus and Mary, intending to gain all the indulgences in my power." 3. "I purpose, O Lord, to avoid, this day, every offence against thee; but do thou extend thy protecting hands over me, that I may not betray thee. Most holy Mary take me under thy protection. My angel guardian and patron saints, assist me." Then say an *Our Father*, *Hail Mary*, and the *Belief;* with three *Hail Maries* to obtain the virtue of chastity.

II. As soon as possible make half an hour's meditation. (For the necessity, advantages, and method of meditation, see the treatise on Meditation.)

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III. Fail not to hear mass every day. This ought to be done for the ends for which the holy sacrifice was instituted; viz: First, for the honour of God; Secondly, to thank him for all his benefits; Thirdly, to make satisfaction for sin; and Fourthly, to obtain divine grace. For these ends say: "Eternal Father, I offer to thee in the holy mass Jesus Christ with all the merits of his sacred passion; First, for the honour of thy majesty; Secondly, in thanksgiving for all thy benefits; Thirdly, in satisfaction for all my sins, and for those of all who have died in thy grace; and Fourthly, to obtain all graces necessary for salvation. At the elevation of the host, say: "O my God, for the love of Jesus Christ, forgive me my sins and grant me holy perseverance." At the elevation of the chalice, say: "Through the blood of Jesus Christ, grant that I may love thee in time and eternity." At the communion of the priest make a spiritual communion, say: "O Jesus, I love thee, and desire to receive thee into my soul; I embrace thee, and desire to be never more separated from thee."

IV. Make every day half, or at least a quarter of an hour's spiritual reading, particularly from the Lives of the Saints.

V. Make every day a visit to the Blessed Sacrament, during which use the following acts: 1. "I thank thee, O Lord, for having

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lovingly left thyself to us in the most holy sacrament." 2. "I love thee with my whole heart, O my sovereign good, above all things; and because I love thee, I am truly sorry for all my offences against thee, both venial and grievous." 3. "I beseech thee to grant me perseverance in thy grace, and the gift of thy holy love." Make also a visit to the Blessed Virgin.

VI. In the evening make an examination of conscience, and say the acts of faith, hope and charity.

VII. Go to confession and communion every week, and oftener if possible. Before going to confession, say: "I thank thee, O God, for having waited for me until now. I hope, through the merits of Jesus Christ, for the pardon of all my sins, for which, having deserved hell, and forfeited heaven, I am sorry with my whole heart; but, above all, I repent of them with my whole soul, and hate and detest them above every evil, because by them I have offended thee, who art infinite goodness. I resolve for the future rather to die than offend thee."

After confession thank God for the pardon which you hope you have received, and renew your resolution of never more offending him, beseeching him to enable you to persevere.

The holy communion is that efficacious

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medicine, as the Council of Trent says, which frees us from daily venial sins, and preserves us from mortal ones. He who communicates frequently will, in proportion, be more free from sins, and will advance more in divine love; he must, however, communicate with proper dispositions. But to reap abundant fruit, spend at least half an hour in devout acts after communion. The frequency of communion must be regulated by the advice of a director.

VIII. Choose an approved confessor to direct you in all spiritual matters, and even in temporal affairs of importance; and do not leave him for another without a weighty reason for so doing. St. Philip Neri said: "Those who desire to advance in the ways of God commit themselves to a wise confessor, whom they obey as holding the place of God. He who does this, secures himself from rendering an account to God of his actions." And this is agreeable to that which Jesus Christ says of his ministers: *He who hears you, hears me.* Make a general confession if you have never made one. This will be a most efficacious means of putting your life in order, and it will be well to make it to your usual director, that he may the better advise you.

IX. Fly idleness, wicked company, immodest discourses, and, above all, dangerous

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occasions, particularly such as regard purity; and hence be very careful not to look at dangerous objects. He who avoids not voluntary dangerous occasions, particularly those in which he has frequently fallen, will find it morally impossible to continue in the grace of God. *He who loves the danger shall perish in it.*

X. In time of temptation trust not yourself, nor all your resolutions and promises, but put your confidence in the divine assistance; and for this have immediate recourse to God, and to the Blessed Virgin. In temptations against purity be particularly careful not to parly with the temptation. Some, on such occasions, exercise themselves in making contrary acts of the will, but they expose themselves to great danger in so doing. The best way is to renew your resolution of dying rather than lose God, and immediately to make the sign of the cross, and recommend yourself to God, and to the Blessed Virgin; frequently pronouncing the names of Jesus and Mary, which have a special efficacy against impure suggestions, and ceasing not to invoke them until the temptation ceases. We have not strength of ourselves to resist the powerful enemy of the flesh, but God readily grants strength to those who invoke it; he who invokes it not is almost always overcome. In the same man-

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ner drive away temptations against faith, protesting your readiness to die for the faith. On such occasions it will be better not so much to make acts of faith, as acts of love, hope, and contrition.

XI. When you commit any sin, if it be venial, make an act of the love of God and of repentance, purpose amendment, and be not disturbed or troubled. To be disturbed on account of our defects is the greatest of all defects; because a disturbed soul is incapable of doing any good work. If unfortunately you should ever fall into mortal sin, make immediately an act of contrition, (by which divine grace will be regained,) with a firm purpose of sinning no more, and go as soon as possible to confession.

XII. Attend sermons as often as you have it in your power. And it will be well every year to make a retreat, spending eight days in meditation and spiritual reading, avoiding as much as possible unnecessary conversations and amusements. And in the same manner spend one day in every month, and, on such occasions, go to confession and communion. Enter also (if your state of life allow it) into some pious society of seculars, in which the sacraments are frequently approached; and in which only the affairs of salvation are attended to. He who joins such a society for the sake of superiority,

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government, or contention, will do himself much more harm than good. He who would derive advantage from societies of this kind, must enter them solely for the purpose of attending to the welfare of the soul.

XIII. Be careful in all adverse occurrences, such as sickness, losses and persecutions, to be ever conformed to the divine will, calmly saying: "Such is God's will, such also is my will. So hath it pleased him, so be it done." He who does this, lays up for himself great merit in the kingdom of heaven, and is always composed. On the other hand, he who is not resigned to the divine will only redoubles his calamities, since he must endure them whether he will or not; and besides there will remain for him to suffer the punishment which he deserves by his impatience.

XIV. Be particularly attentive to cherish a tender and special devotion to the most holy Mary. Never omit the three *Hail Maries*, mentioned in the beginning, at your morning and evening prayers, beseeching her to preserve you, by her powerful intercession, from all kinds of sin. Read every day some pious book that treats of her, and say her litany, and the rosary, meditating on the mysteries.

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ADMONITIONS,

ADDRESSED TO PERSONS OF ALL STATES WHO DESIRE TO BE SAVED.

God wills the salvation of all: 'He will have all men to be saved.' 1 Tim. ii. 4. And he desires to afford to all the means of salvation; but he bestows them only upon those that ask him for them, as Saint Augustin writes. Hence the common opinion of divines, and of the holy Fathers, that prayer is so necessary for adults, that those who do not pray, and neglect to ask of God the proper helps to overcome temptations and to persevere in his grace, cannot be saved.

The Lord, on the contrary, cannot fail to grant those graces which are besought of him, since he has promised: 'Cry to me and I will hear thee.' Jer. xxxiii. 3. 'You shall ask whatsoever you will, and it shall be done unto you.' St. John xv. 7. 'Ask, and it shall be given to you.' St. Matt. vii. 7. Such promises, however, are not to be understood as regarding temporal goods, which God only bestows when they will be advantageous to the soul; but he has promised absolutely to bestow spiritual graces upon them that ask them, and having promised, he obliges himself to grant them. "By promising he hath made himself a debtor," says St. Augustin.

It must be remembered that prayer, in

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regard of God, is a promise, and in regard of ourselves a strict precept. 'Ask, and it shall be given to you.' St. Matt. vii. 7. 'We ought always to pray.' St. Luke xviii. 1. These expressions *ask*, and *we ought*, as Saint Thomas teaches (3 p., q. 39, a. 5) imply a strict precept, which is obligatory through life, and especially when we are in danger of death, or of falling into sin; because then, if we have not recourse to God, we shall certainly be overcome. And if already fallen into sin, we shall commit a fresh sin, if we have not recourse to God to help us out of so deplorable a state. But will God hear us when we have become his enemies? Yes, for when the sinner humbles himself, and prays from his heart for pardon, God willingly listens to him, as it is said in the Gospel: 'Every one that asketh, receiveth.' St. Luke xi. 10. It is said *every one*, that is, whether he be a just man or a sinner, if he prays, God promises to hear him. In another place God says: 'Call upon me.....and I will deliver thee.' Ps. xlix. 15.

No, at the day of judgment there will be no excuse for those that die in sin. It will not avail them to say that they had not strength to resist the temptations that assailed them; for Jesus Christ will answer them: if you had not strength, why did you not pray to me for it, that I might have im-

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parted it to you? And when you had fallen into sin, why did you not have recourse to me, that I might have delivered you from it?

Wherefore, dear reader, if you would be saved and keep yourself in the grace of God, you must frequently pray to him to protect and help you. The Council of Trent declares, that to preserve the grace of God in the soul, the general assistance which God grants to all is not sufficient, but that a special assistance is necessary, which is not to be obtained but by prayer. Hence all divines say, that every one is bound, under pain of grievous sin, to recommend himself frequently to God, beseeching him for holy perseverance. And he who is more exposed to dangerous occasions, is obliged to pray more frequently for the grace of perseverance.

It is of great use, for the obtaining of this grace, to cherish a particular devotion to the Mother of God, who is called the mother of perseverance; and he who is not particularly devout to the Blessed Virgin, will with difficulty persevere; since, as St. Bernard says, all the divine graces, and especially that of perseverance, which is the greatest of all, come to us through the medium of Mary.

Would to God that preachers and confessors were more diligent in insisting upon this great means of prayer. It is certain, that

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he who prays is saved, and that he who does not pray is lost.

And hence, dear reader, I repeat, if you would be saved, pray continually to the Lord to give you light and strength not to fall into sin. In this it behoves us to be importunate with God. "Such importunity," says St. Jerome, "is seasonable with our Lord." Fail not every morning to beseech him to preserve you from sin during the day. And when a bad thought comes into your mind, or a dangerous occasion occurs, have immediate recourse, without any dalliance with the temptation, to Jesus Christ and to his blessed Mother, saying: "O Jesus, help me: most holy Mary, succour me." Then repeat the names of Jesus and Mary to dispel the temptation; but if it continue, cease not to invoke the assistance of Jesus and Mary, and you shall never be overcome.

ABSTRACT

OF THE PRINCIPAL VIRTUES NECESSARY FOR THOSE WHO DESIRE TO LEAD A LIFE OF SANCTITY AND PERFECTION.*

Desire to increase continually in the love of Jesus Christ. Good desires are the wings

* This may be read whenever you make a day's retreat, in order to discover in what virtue you are the most deficient.

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on which the soul flies up to God. St. Aloysius Gonzega soon became a Saint by means of the ardent desire which he cherished of loving God; and because he knew that he was not capable of loving God as God deserved, he sunk under the intensity of his desire, and died. Hence St. Mary Magdalen of Pazzi calls him the martyr of love.

Meditate often on the passion of Jesus Christ. St. Bonaventure says, that the wounds of Jesus Christ are wounds which wound our hearts, and inflame them with love.

Frequently in the day, make acts of the love of Jesus Christ, particularly when you awake in the morning, and when you lie down to rest at night. Acts of love, says St. Teresa, are the fuel which maintains divine love in the soul.

Ever pray to Jesus Christ, to grant you his love. The grace of loving God, says St. Francis of Sales, contains in itself all other graces; since the soul that loves God is careful to avoid every thing that can offend him, and to do all in its power to please him. And hence, above all things else, you should ever beg of God the grace of loving him.

Approach frequently to the holy communion. The soul can do nothing more pleasing to God than to communicate in the state of grace. The reason is, because love tends to

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a perfect union with the object beloved; and Jesus Christ, having an ardent love for a soul in grace, desires above all things to become united with it. It is in the holy communion that Jesus Christ becomes thus united with the soul: *He that eateth my flesh, abideth in me, and I in him.* And hence it is that the soul cannot do any thing more pleasing to Jesus Christ than to receive him in the holy Eucharist. Spiritual souls are careful to communicate frequently in the week, and, if possible, every day: but always with the advice of their director; because frequent communion and mortifications are apt soon to produce pride in the soul, when regulated by self-judgment. For the rest, as regards the holy communion as well as mortifications, the penitent should earnestly ask permission for them, of his director, inasmuch as the director will grant the use of them more or less frequently in proportion as he perceives the desire of his penitent to be more or less ardent for them.

Make spiritual communions in the course of the day; at least three.

Frequently visit the Blessed Sacrament on the altar, at least once or twice in the day; and in paying these visits, after making acts of faith, gratitude, love and contrition, fervently beg of him to grant you perseverance and divine love.

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When troubles, losses, affronts, or other adversities befal you, have recourse to the Blessed Sacrament, if in a situation where you can do so.

When you rise in a morning, always offer yourself to God, to bear patiently and to receive as coming from his hands, all the crosses which he shall please to send you. *Thy will be done*, was constantly in the mouths of the Saints. "Lord, may thy holy will be ever done in us!"

Rejoice and be glad that God is infinitely happy and blessed. If we love God more than we love ourselves, as we ought to love him, we shall rejoice more in his than in our own happiness.

Long after heaven and for death to liberate you from the danger of losing God, that you may love Jesus Christ with all the powers of your soul for all eternity, without the danger of ever more losing him.

Speak often with others on the love which Jesus Christ has shown us, and the love which we ought to have for him.

Walk with God without reserve, refusing him nothing that can please him; and choose such things as you know will be most pleasing to him.

Desire yourself, and endeavour to induce all others, to love Jesus Christ.

Ever pray for the souls in purgatory and for poor sinners.

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Expel from your heart every affection which has not God for its object.

Have frequent recourse to the Saints, especially to the ever Blessed Virgin, that they may obtain for you the love of God.

Honour Mary in order to please God.

Perform all your actions solely with a view to please Jesus Christ; saying at the beginning of every action: "Lord, be it all for thee!"

Frequently in the day offer yourself to God and to Jesus Christ, to suffer every pain for the love of him, saying: "O Jesus, I give my whole self to thee; behold me, and do with me what thou pleasest."

Be resolved rather to die a thousand times than commit a wilful sin, even a venial sin.

Deny yourself even lawful gratifications: do this at least twice or thrice in the day.

When riches are spoken of, or honours, or worldly amusement, let us reflect that all must end, and let us say: My God, thee only do I desire, and nothing more.

Spend two hours, or at least one hour daily, in mental prayer.

Practice all the external mortifications that obedience will permit of; but pay particular attention to those of the interior, as to abstain from the gratification of curiosity, from replying to injuries, from facetiousness and

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the like; and never do any thing for self gratification.

Perform every devout exercise as though it were the last time you should ever perform it. And hence think frequently on death; and, when lying on your bed, think you must one day expire there.

Forsake not your accustomed devotions or other good works, on account of their being dry or tedious. He who gives up a part of them is in danger of giving up the whole.

Never do or neglect any good work out of human respect.

In sickness, make no complaints of your medical attendants or servants; and even conceal your sufferings as much as may be.

Love solitude and silence in order to converse with God alone. And hence avoid worldly conversations.

Drive away sadness, preserving uniformly in all occurrences the same tranquillity and a cheerful countenance. He that wills what God wills should never be afflicted and sad. Recommend yourself frequently to spiritual persons.

In time of temptation, have immediate recourse to Jesus and to Mary with great confidence, continuing to repeat the name of Jesus and Mary as long as the temptation lasts.

Have great confidence first in the passion

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of Jesus Christ, and then in the intercession of the Blessed Virgin. And beg of God daily to grant you this confidence.

After falling into any defect be not troubled nor lose confidence, although you should fall frequently into the same defect; but repent of it immediately, and, placing your confidence in God, resolve to amend.

Return good for evil, praying for those who injure you.

Speak mildly to those who abuse you, either by words or actions, that by so doing you may gain them.

When disturbed, keep silence until you are calm; otherwise you will fall into many defects without being aware of them.

In giving correction, be careful that both yourself and the person to be corrected are calm; otherwise the correction will prove injurious rather than serviceable.

Speak well of all; and excuse their intentions when you cannot excuse their actions.

Help your neighbour as much as you are able, particularly when he is in adverse circumstances.

Neither do nor say any thing to offend another unless your duty to God require it. And whenever you fail in charity to another, ask his pardon, or at least speak kindly to him.

Speak always with meekness and in a subdued tone of voice.

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Offer up to God the slights and contempt which you receive, without complaining of them to others.

Punctually observe the rules laid down for you by your director.

Esteem your superiors as holding in your regard the place of Jesus Christ.

Love the lowest offices.

Choose for yourself the poorest things.

Obey without reply or showing any repugnance; and ask for nothing for your own honour or satisfaction.

Speak neither good nor evil of yourself: the speaking ill of one's self sometimes foments pride.

Humble yourself even to inferiors.

Do not excuse yourself when reprehended or calumniated: unless it be absolutely necessary for the common good, or to avoid scandal.

Visit and assist the sick, particularly such as are most destitute.

Say frequently to yourself: If I would become a Saint, I must suffer; if I would please God, I must do his will and not my own.

Often renew your resolution of becoming a Saint; and never allow yourself to remain in a state of tepidity.

Daily renew your resolution of advancing towards perfection.

If a religious, renew daily the vows of your profession.

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The exercise most necessary for a soul that desires to please God is conformity in all things to the divine will, willingly embracing all things contrary to our inclinations, pains, infirmities, affronts, contradictions, loss of goods, the death of relatives and friends, by previously accepting them in the morning as from the hands of God. Tribulations are the blessed means by which the Saints acquire ample treasures of merit. We cannot possibly give greater glory to God than by conforming ourselves in all things to his blessed will. This is the constant exercise of devout souls. And to this mental prayer is of great assistance: "He," says St. Teresa, "who exercises himself in mental prayer and conformity with the will of God, does all that is necessary; and may be assured that in this consists the highest perfection."

This then should be the only object of all our actions, meditations and prayers; our constant prayer should be: *Teach me to do thy will: Lord, what wilt thou have me to do: Thy will be done.* Such is the constant prayer of the Saints, and is all that God requires of us: *Son, give me thy heart.*

But perfection consists in conforming ourselves to the divine will in all things which are displeasing to us. Father John of Avila said: "One act of thanksgiving, when things

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go wrong with us, is worth a thousand thanks when things are agreeable to our inclinations." Moreover we must conform ourselves in crosses which happen to us on the part of men, as calumnies, thefts, and contempt; because all come from God. He does not, on such occasions, will the sins of those who offend us, but only our humiliation and mortification. *Good and evil things are from God.* We may call tribulations evils and misfortunes, and we may make them such by our impatience: but did we accept of them with resignation, they would become for us goods, and jewels to enrich our crown in heaven. In a word, he who is ever united to the divine will becomes a Saint, and enjoys, even here on earth, a perpetual peace. 'Whatever shall befal the just man, it shall not make him sad.' Prov. xii. 21.

Recommend yourself to the prayers of devout persons; but still more to the Saints in heaven, and especially to the Blessed Virgin, making great account of devotion to her; and lose no opportunity of promoting this devotion in others. Those who have great confidence in the patronage of the Blessed Virgin have reason to thank our Lord for it, since she is the great earnest of their salvation; and those who have it not should pray to him to grant it to them.

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SURE MARKS

BY WHICH TO DISCOVER WHETHER OR NO THE LOVE OF GOD REIGNS IN US.

Divine love in the sacred Scriptures is compared to fire.

Our Lord, to declare to us in the Gospel, *St. Luke* xii. 49, that he came upon the earth to bring divine love, expresses himself by saying, that he came upon the earth to bring fire! *I am come to cast fire upon the earth.* And God himself, in the *Apocalypse* iii. 13, persuades the soul to provide herself with burning gold: *I counsel thee to buy... gold fire-tried*, that is, divine love.

Now fire has two properties: it resists what is contrary to it, that is, blasts and breezes; so that instead of being extinguished is increased by them; and it is also active: fire always tends to action. Here then are two sure marks by which to discover whether or no the love of God reigns in us; labour and patience.

Do we always labour for God, by a pure intention of doing his divine will, and of pleasing him in all things? Do we for his sake willingly suffer every kind of adversity, poverty, tribulations, infirmities, and the like? Instead of being removed from him, are we brought nearer to him by such things? If so, we have within us the holy love of

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God: our love is fire which evinces itself in action and resists what is contrary to it: if not, our love for God is not true but false love; the love of the tongue, but not of the heart; against which St. John admonishes us in his first epistle, iii. 18: 'My little children,' (words full of charity,) 'my little children, let us not love in word, nor in tongue, but in deed, and in truth.'

"If it is not active," says St. Gregory, "it is not love." And Jesus Christ says: 'He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them: he it is that loveth me.' St. John xiv. 21. St. Augustin says: "Love renders all bitter and cruel things quite easy and almost nothing." So that, if we act always for the sake of God, if we keep the divine commandments, (and with the divine commandments, those of his holy Church, and the obligations and duties of our states of life) if we generously and cheerfully surmount, for God's sake, every thing contrary to our inclinations, even what is most displeasing to us, we have within us the holy love of God. Our love is fire, which evinces itself in action and resists what is contrary to it. If not, our love for God is not true but false love, the love of the tongue but not of the heart. *My little children, let us not love in word, nor in tongue, but in deed, and in truth.*

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But to some more practical proof. You have an opportunity of honestly gaining a great profit; an occasion offers of some lawful gratification; the duties of your state of life are painful to you; the fatigues of your employment weary you; but for God's sake, you care not for such profit, you renounce such gratification, you fulfil all your duties, and go through all your labours? If so, you have the holy love of God: your love is fire which evinces itself in action: if not, your love for God is not true but false love, the love of the tongue but not of the heart. *My little children, let us not love in word, nor in tongue, but in deed, and in truth.*

Again: an unexpected tribulation comes upon you; a litigation arises, on which your all depends; one in whom all your hopes are placed, and who is your only support, suddenly dies; do you, on such occasions, offer all to your Lord, and bear all with cheerfulness? If so, you have the holy love of God: your love is fire which resists what is contrary to it: if not, your love for God is not true but false love, the love of the tongue and not of the heart. *My little children, let us not love in word, nor in tongue, but in deed, and in truth.*

O how much surer a mark of love is suffering than action! since in action, it is pleasant in him who loves, to employ himself in

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favour of the object loved, and this is a sign that he loves; but he who suffers, entirely renounces self in favour of the object whom he loves, and this therefore is a sign that he loves the more.

By this, the Almighty chose in a singular manner to prove the great love of his servant Job. This holy man was certainly a great lover of God: but when did he shew himself truly to be so? When he saw himself surrounded by a numerous family? When he enjoyed himself in the abundance of all good things? When he was in perfect health? Yes, even then: since he acknowledged all as coming from God, rendered him thanks for all, offered sacrifices, attended to his duties, gave holy counsel to his children, and prayed continually for them: *Lest perhaps*, said he, *my sons have sinned.* But he showed how truly great his love for God was, when God, in order to put his love to the test, stripped him at once of all his goods, deprived him by death of all his children, afflicted him with disease, and so covered him with leprosy, that *he took a potsherd and scraped the corrupt matter, sitting on a dunghill:* in all these terrible calamities, in all these unheard-of afflictions, he only repeated, with invincible and ever more than memorable patience: 'The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away: as it

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hath pleased the Lord, so is it done: blessed be the name of the Lord.' i. 21.

But who is holy Job? Jesus Christ himself, when he was about to suffer the torments of his passion, said to his Apostles: 'That the world may know that I love the Father.....Arise, let us go hence.' St. John xiv. 31. This, this is the most certain and incontestable mark of the true love of God: patience, patience; the suffering willingly of every thing for God's sake.

The sayings and practices of the Saints on this head are very memorable.

St. Teresa: "Either to suffer or to die." St. Mary Magdalen of Pazzi: "To suffer and not to die." St. John of the Cross: "To suffer and to be silent."

The holy martyrs defied the executioners to torment them, and provoked the wild beasts to devour them.

St. Liduina willingly suffered a painful infirmity for thirty-three years.

St. Frances of Rome voluntarily suffered the unjust exile of her husband and the confiscation of all their goods; and St. John of the Cross voluntarily endured a severe imprisonment of nine months, with a thousand other inconveniences and sufferings.

This, this is the most certain and incontestable mark of the true love of God: pa-

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tience, patience; the suffering willingly of every thing for God's sake.

Happy and blessed is he who by these two sure marks, labour and patience, the doing and suffering all for God, is enabled to recognise within him the true love of God!

All the gold in the world in comparison with a slight degree of the holy love of God, is no more than a grain of sand: 'All gold, in comparison of her, is as a little sand.' Wisd. vii. 9. And all the riches in the world, in comparison with a slight degree of the holy love of God, are no more than nothing: 'I esteemed riches nothing in comparison of her.' Wisd. vii. 8.

But what are all the riches and gold in the world? Even all supernatural gifts are nothing without the holy love of God. Thus speaks the apostle St. Paul, 1 *Cor.* 13, who arrived at so high a degree of the holy love of God, and therefore knew so well its value. *If*, says he, *I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. And if I should have prophecy, and should know all mysteries, and all knowledge, and if I should have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.*

The virtue of charity, or the holy love of

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God, is the queen of all virtues, which reigns and will reign for ever.

Faith, after death, will have its reward, because it will see what it has believed; but the virtue of faith will not continue in heaven.

Hope, after death, will have its reward, because it will realize its object: but the virtue of hope will not continue in heaven.

But charity, that is, the love of God, after death, will not only have its reward, but will reign for ever, because with the immense beatitude of heaven it will continue to love for eternity that God whom it loved in this world.

Happy indeed then, blessed indeed is he who, by these two sure marks of labour and patience, of willingly doing and suffering all for God, can discover in himself the true and holy love of God!

Let us then all love, let us all and each one in the world thus love God. In all our actions let us have God before our eyes, doing in all things his divine will, and seeking in all things to please him; and let us, not only with sufferance, but even with joy, bear all that may happen contrary to self love and human sensibility.

It was for no other end but to love God, that God created us and sent us into this world.

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To accomplish this end let us direct all our care and solicitude.

Let us make no account of any thing but of divine love, and ask for nothing but love; let each one frequently say with St. Ignatius: Give me only thy grace and love and I shall be sufficiently rich: I ask for nothing more.

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SHORT

Practice of Perfection,

SELECTED FROM

THE DOCTRINES OF ST. TERESA.

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Short Practice of Perfection,

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PERFECTION consists in the practice of two things; detachment from creatures and union with God. This is expressly taught us by Jesus Christ in these words: 'If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.' St. Matt. xvi. 24.

As regards detachment from creatures, St. John says; 'Love not the world, nor the things which are in the world.....For all that is in the world, is the concupiscence of the flesh, the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life.' 1 Eph. ii. 16. So that all our imperfections arise from three kinds of inordinate love; the love of pleasure, the love of possessions, and the love of self esteem. Upon these St. Teresa beautifully remarks: "It is just that he who adheres to things which are lost should himself be lost."

The love of pleasure or self gratification, is to be overcome by detaching the heart

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from such things by means of internal and external mortification.

By internal mortification is meant the regulation of the passions, the never doing any thing from self love, vanity, caprice, or human motives, but solely to please God. The interior passions are of two kinds, the irascible and the concupiscible.

Of the irascible the principle is the passion of anger, which is to be overcome by the virtue of meekness, and this is to be exercised, First, by never being angry with another: Secondly, by conversing with all with equal mildness: Thirdly, by speaking in a subdued tone of voice, with a cheerful air and mild words, particularly with irritable and troublesome persons: Fourthly, by quietly bearing with the defects, injuries, and annoyances of others: Fifthly, by not being disturbed nor disheartened on account of our own defects, but by humbling ourselves, by calmly rising from them with an act of repentance, and, thinking no more of the past, pursuing our career with greater fervor and greater confidence in God; and by doing this whenever we fall: Sixthly, by never speaking nor acting when the heart is disturbed. St. Francis of Sales says: "I have made a league with my tongue never to speak when my heart is disturbed." It is of great service on such occasions to confer

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with a director or some other spiritual person.

Of the concupiscible, is all inordinate love for all sorts of persons, and particularly for young persons of a different sex, which is to be overcome by avoiding their conversation, affectionate expressions or letters, presents, jests, and every thing else which that is calculated to excite the affections. St. Teresa says: "Cease to expose yourself to evil occasions and the soul will immediately return to love God." And if they are relations, we should always endeavour to please God rather than them, because they in general love their own interests more than our advantage. So that we should, First, never relinquish the practice of necessary virtues to suit their views: Secondly, when God calls us to a state of life of greater perfection, we should courageously leave them, obeying God rather than them: Thirdly, we should never involve ourselves in family affairs hurtful to us, unless obliged to do so by charity.

Self-will belongs also to the concupiscible, which is to be overcome by obedience. "Obedience," says St. Teresa, "Is the short way to perfection;" and she adds: "O virtue of obedience, which canst do all things!" In like manner St. Catharine of Bologna said, that obedience alone is more pleasing to

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God than all other good works. In practice then, we must, First, regulate ourselves in all things regarding the soul, however trivial they may be, by obedience either to our superiors, our own rules, or our director. "The devil," says St. Teresa, "knows well that in this consists the remedy of the soul, and therefore tries to hinder it as much as possible." On the other hand, she says: "God requires nothing more of a soul resolved to love him, but obedience." Secondly, we must obey without delay, leaving whatever else is to be done, and in all things in which it is not evident that there is sin. Thirdly, we must obey willingly, and not with sourness. Fourthly, we must obey blindly, without enquiring the reasons, but conforming our sentiments to those of superiors. Lastly: in things which are good, regarding which we are not under obedience, it is most secure to do that which is most contrary to our own inclinations.

External mortification consists in detaching ourselves from the pleasures of the senses, by mortifying, First, the sight, by not looking on illicit, dangerous, or curious objects: by walking with the eyes cast down: by observing modesty with ourselves in dressing or undressing, and in every other action. Secondly, the hearing, by not listening to murmurs, immodesty or news. Third-

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ly, the smell, by depriving ourselves of fragrant flowers, scented waters, perfumes, &c. Fourthly, the taste, as regards the quantity of food; First, by not eating nor drinking solely for the sake of gratification, nor to satisfy the appetite, but only to afford sufficient support to nature; Secondly, by not eating between meals; Thirdly, by always renouncing something at table for the love of God; Fourthly, by eating little in the evening, and occasionally nothing. As regards the quality of food: First, by not seeking for nice and delicate things, nor high-seasoned sauces, and the like; Secondly, by sometimes making use of some bitter herb with our food; Thirdly, by at least not complaining, when our food is ill done, cold or insipid.

The touch is to be mortified, First, by not seeking too much ease in bedding, clothing, or furniture: Secondly, by depriving ourselves of fire in the winter and of gloves and fans in the summer; Thirdly, by making use of disciplines and the like, but always under the guidance of a director: otherwise, says St. Philip Neri, either the health or humility will be ruined; Fourthly, by at least not complaining in sickness, fatigue, inconveniences, or interior trials, but offering them all to Jesus Christ. St. Teresa has left us, on the subject of external morti-

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fication, the following excellent sentiments: "To suppose that God admits to his friendship those who are ever seeking their own ease and comfort, is absurd.——The spirit of delicacy and ease corresponds not with the spirit of prayer.——Souls that really love God cannot seek for repose."

The restraining of the tongue by silence belongs also to external mortification, which is to be exercised, First, by speaking little and with consideration; Secondly, during some hour in the day, by not speaking at all, unless from necessity; Thirdly, by speaking frequently with God, and by introducing something spiritual into all our discourses. St. Teresa said: "In the conversations of the servants of God, Jesus is always present, and is much pleased that they should delight in him."

The second kind of inordinate love, is the love of possessions, and this is to be overcome by poverty. First, by dispensing with what is superfluous and retaining only what is necessary, or, at least, by renouncing all undue attachment to what is possessed. Secondly, by choosing the meanest things. Thirdly, by rejoicing when even that which is necessary is wanting. St. Teresa said: "Poverty is a good which comprises all the goods of the world." And in another place: "The less we have here, the more shall we enjoy in eternity."

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The third kind of inordinate love, is the love of self-esteem, and this is to be overcome by humility, which is to be exercised, First, by giving all glory to God in whatever good we do, and expelling from our hearts all vain complacency. St. Teresa said: "When we intend to please God alone, he will enable us to overcome all vain-glory." Secondly, by esteeming ourselves as being worse than all, and all others as being better than ourselves, ever regarding that which is good in others, and in ourselves whatever is defective, reflecting particularly on the many graces which we have received from God. Thirdly, by desiring to be thus estimated and treated by others. Fourthly, by not seeking honours, praise, nor posts of honour, and by not accepting of them unless obliged to do so by obedience to superiors. Fifthly, by not excusing or defending ourselves when wrongly blamed, unless in case of scandal, or hindrance of the greater glory of God. St. Teresa said; "Once not to excuse one's self advances the soul towards perfection more than many sermons." Sixthly, by never saying a word without necessity in praise of ourselves, our talents, birth, parents, riches, &c. Seventhly, by being patient, and rejoicing before God at being despised, repressed, derided, calumniated or persecuted. St. Teresa said: "Who is he

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that, seeing our Lord covered with wounds and afflicted with persecutions, does not embrace or desire them?" On this head, the Saints have frequently sought from God the grace of being despised for his sake. It is well, at least in meditation, to prepare ourselves to bear with contempt, by anticipating whatever occasions may present themselves. St. Teresa said; "One act of humility is worth more than all the learning in the world."

The second means, which we mentioned in the beginning, and indeed the principal means of attaining perfection, is union with God; which is effected by the following means: First, by the perfect love of God, by loving him above all things, so as to be willing to die rather than commit the least wilful sin. St. Teresa says: "May God deliver you from deliberately committing even the most trivial sin!" "For," adds she, "the devil, by means of the smallest things, opens a way through which great things may enter." Again, she has this admonition: "True devotion consists in not offending God and in being resolved to do all that is good." Secondly, we must love him with our whole heart, ever desiring to arrive at a higher degree of perfection in order to please him; upon this St. Teresa observes: "God will not suffer any good desire to go unrewarded

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even in this life." And she also says that our Lord, "ordinarily, does not confer many signal favours, except upon those who have greatly desired to love him." But to desires we must add actions, by overcoming with fortitude human respects, our own repugnance, and all worldly interest. Thirdly, we must love God continually, and on all occasions; and for this end we must direct and offer all to him, even our indifferent actions, such as our eating, diversions, walking, breathing, uniting all with the actions of Jesus Christ and of the Blessed Virgin when on earth. Moreover we must cheerfully suffer all adverse and painful things; conforming ourselves and uniting ourselves to the will of God in whatever he is pleased to do in us and for us. Upon this St. Teresa has left the following excellent sentiments: "And what more can we wish to gain than the testimony of doing what is pleasing to God?" And she explains what this testimony is: "Whilst we live, our gain does not consist in endeavouring to enjoy God, but in doing his will. Great is the efficacy of this giving of our will to God, for it induces him to unite himself with our lowliness. True union is the union of our will with the will of God."

To promote this, to keep alive the flame of divine love, we must, First, make fre

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quent acts of love in the course of the day, but particularly when we approach to the holy communion, and during the time of meditation, saying to him: My most beloved and only treasure, my God, my all, I love thee with my whole heart. I give my whole self to thee without reserve, and I consecrate to thee all my thoughts, desires and affections. I desire, I sigh, I seek for nothing but thee alone, my only life. To please thee is my only delight. Do in me and with me whatever thou pleasest. My God and only good, grant me but to love thee and I ask for nothing more.

Secondly, to effect an union with God, we must attend to mental prayer, the property of which is, as St. John Clymachus says, to unite the soul to God, by means of love, which it excites. It behoves us therefore to give as much time as possible to this holy exercise, at least half an hour, morning and evening, meditating on the truths of eternity, on the divine benefits, and particularly on the life and death of Jesus Christ.

After meditation, whenever the soul is not led by a particular favour of Almighty God to contemplation, it is good to exercise it in affections and pious aspirations, but without violence, endeavouring to do so not so much with sensible devotion as a pure will, or even in vocal prayers; always making in conclusion some good resolution.

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St. Teresa says on this subject: "The time which is spent without meditation, is all lost. The soul which discontinues meditation, places itself, as it were, in hell, independently of the devil.—Learning is a great help to meditation, when accompanied with humility."

As regards aridity, the Saint gives us great encouragement; she says: "Our Lord proves his lovers by aridity and temptations. Although aridity should continue through a whole life, meditation ought not to be discontinued; a time will come when all will be most richly repaid." In another place: "The love of God does not consist in tender devotion, but in serving him with fortitude and humility. The soul that perseveres in meditation, notwithstanding the sins which the devil opposes to her, I hold for certain that our Lord will finally conduct to the gate of salvation.—The devil knows that he has lost the soul that perseveres in meditation. He who stops not in the way of meditation, although he advance but slowly, will certainly arrive at the end of his journey." To persevere in meditation three things are necessary: retirement, silence, and detachment from creatures. To meditation should be added spiritual reading, at least for half an hour in the day, in such works as those of Rodriguez, Sanguire, and particularly the

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Lives of the Saints, so much recommended by St. Philip Neri.

Thirdly, we must, as often as possible, but with the advice of a director, receive the holy communion, which is called the sacrament of union, inasmuch as in it the soul is wholly united with Jesus Christ. But care must be taken to prepare for it, by directing all our spiritual exercises to that end. An hour, or at least half an hour, should be spent in affections and prayers of thanksgiving after communion. St. Teresa says: While Jesus Christ remains in the soul, he is, as it were, on the throne of mercy to dispense his graces. Her words are these: "After communion, let us not lose so favourable an opportunity of treating with him." And in another place: "His divine Majesty is not accustomed to pay ill for his abode, when he meets with a good reception." For preparation and thanksgiving three points should be particularly dwelt upon. First, who is it that is coming? Jesus. Secondly, to whom is he coming? to me. Thirdly, why is he coming? to be loved. To these should be united three acts, of faith, of humility, and love. Frequent spiritual communions in the course of the day are of great assistance in maintaining an union with God. St. Teresa says: "To make spiritual communions is very profitable; do not ne-

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glect them, because by them you will prove to our Lord how much you love him." Make also frequent visits to the most holy Sacrament. "What," says the Saint, "would become of us, if we had not the most holy Sacrament?" St. Dionysius the Areopagite asserts, that from no other source do so many helps to perfection flow to us, as from the most holy Sacrament.

Fourthly, to keep ourselves in union with God, it is absolutely necessary to attend to prayer, inasmuch as we know from the Gospel that God in general dispenses his graces to those only who seek them. Hence when we rise in the morning we should confidently recommend ourselves to Jesus and Mary, that they may assist us.

It is advisable to do this also in the beginning of all our actions; and never to omit making in the evening an examination of conscience, with acts of repentance and sorrow. In time of temptations, and when we are in danger of committing sin, it is absolutely necessary to have recourse to God, saying at least: Jesus, Mary. St. Teresa says: "I do not understand why certain persons should tremble, saying, the devil, the devil, when we can say God, God, and make him tremble." It is also very necessary to beg of God to grant us the victory over our predominant passion, holy perseverance, his

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love, and perfect conformity with his blessed will. St. Teresa says: "This is not the time to treat with God on affairs of little importance, such as to ask him for temporal things."

Fifthly, it is very conducive to union with God to keep up a continual remembrance of his presence, by reminding ourselves that in every place he sees us, perceives us, surrounds us, and is in us. St. Teresa attributes all our defects to a neglect of this practice; she says: "They all arise from not attending to the presence of God, as though we believed him to be afar off." But this happens because we have but little love for him: "The true lover," observes the Saint, "is ever mindful of the object of his love." To keep up a remembrance of the divine presence, it is a great help to carry about us some special token of it, or to place such a token in our room, or on our table. Let this remembrance be always accompanied by pious ejaculations, acts of love, or offerings of ourselves to God.

Sixthly, for this end make a spiritual retreat of eight or ten days every year, leaving every other employment and conversation, to converse only with God. How many by this means have become Saints! It is very profitable to make also a day's retreat every month.

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Lastly. In order to maintain the union of the soul with God, we must exercise charity towards our neighbour, which as regards the interior, consists in wishing him the same good as we wish ourselves; in not wishing him the evil we wish not for ourselves; in rejoicing in his good, and lamenting the evil which befals him; although we may naturally experience some repugnance in so doing. As regards the exterior, we must, First, not murmur against him, deride or laugh at him, but speak always well of him, and defend, or at least excuse his intention. Secondly, we must console him under afflictions. Thirdly, we must succour him in his necessities of soul and body, particularly in sickness. Fourthly, we must condescend to our neighbour, as St. Teresa expresses it, in all that is not sin. Hence, as St. Francis of Sales admonishes, we must choose a proper time for our neighbour and for ourselves; and when we have been wanting in our behaviour towards him, we ought to seek an occasion of meeting his wishes. Fifthly, we must not give our neighbour bad counsel or bad example. Sixthly, we must occasionally reprove him, but mildly and seasonably, and not when he is agitated with passion. Lastly, and above all, we must endeavour to render good for evil, at least to speak well of those who injure us, treat them with meekness, and recommend them to God, turning away our

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thoughts from the annoyances, harshness and provocations which we seem to have received from them.

As a conclusion to this "Short Practice," we place here, from amongst others, the following instructions which St. Teresa has left us on the subject of perfection, in different parts of her works:

"All our diligence will avail us nothing, if we do not renounce all confidence in ourselves, and place it entirely in God.—So long as we do not give our whole affections to God, we cannot obtain the treasure of divine love.—From devotions performed merely from habit, God deliver us.—All that we can do is worse than nothing in comparison with one drop of the blood which our Lord shed for us.—If we are not wanting on our part, there can be no fear but that God will enable us by his assistance to become Saints.—There is no fear but that God will reward even a raising up of the eyes in remembrance of him.—Our Lord only requires of us resolution, that he may do all the rest.—God never sends any trouble which he does not soon reward by some favour.—By not withdrawing the soul from the pleasures of the world, it will soon withdraw itself from the way of the Lord.—Let your desire be to see God; your fear to lose him; and your enjoyment whatever can conduct you to him."

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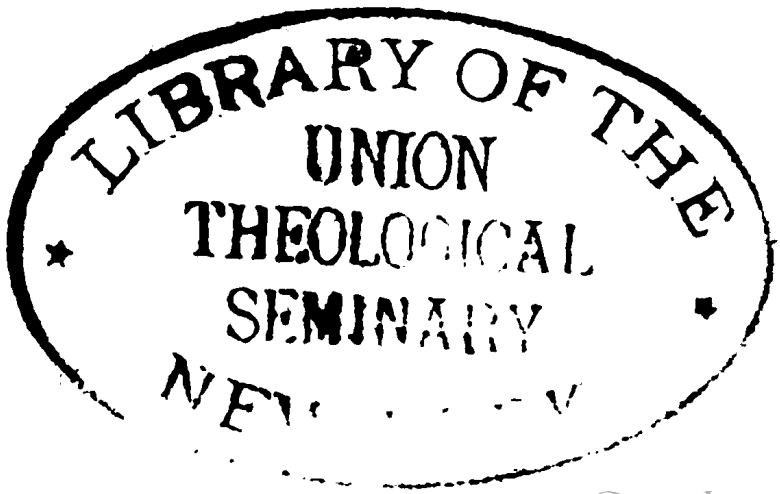
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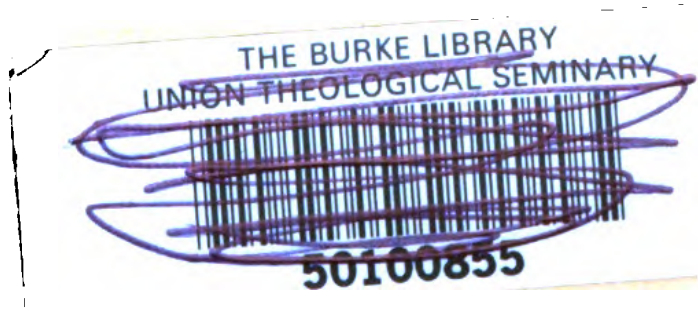
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